

St Paul's C of E Primary School, Stalybridge

Huddersfield Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 2PT

Inspection dates 21–22 June 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Inadequate |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, managers and governors have shown a strong and relentless determination to improve the school since the previous inspection. They have been successful in their drive to improve teaching and learning and strengthen leadership and management.
- Pupils are now making good progress because of good teaching and their achievement has steadily improved in all subjects.
- Senior leaders and staff have worked tirelessly to raise expectations across the school. They know the school well, as shown in their accurate self-evaluation.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are now good. Some of the teaching in upper key stage 2 is outstandingly effective.
- The school has strengthened how it supports disadvantaged pupils; consequently, their progress has accelerated.
- Pupils behave well around school and in lessons; they are keen to learn and show positive attitudes. They often ensure their own work is neat and presented well.
- Pupils say that school is a safe and friendly place. Any minor playground 'fall outs' are quickly dealt with by staff.
- The Reception classes form an increasingly effective early years department. Children get off to a good start. They make good progress in readiness for key stage 1.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although good overall, not enough of the teaching matches the most effective in school.
- In the early years, learning opportunities provided for children who are not directly working with an adult are occasionally less effective.
- Some of the more recent changes affecting leadership across the school need time to become embedded.

Full report

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so it matches the most effective in school, by:
 - identifying the key components of the most effective teaching in school and sharing this with colleagues
 - developing lesson monitoring and evaluation strategies that focus on the identified key components.
- Further improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the early years, by:
 - ensuring activities and opportunities that take place without direct adult supervision are sufficiently engaging and challenging so that further learning takes place.
- Further develop leadership across the school to help plan, monitor and refine actions to improve key aspects of the school's work so they become outstanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have pursued their school improvement action plan with vigour and determination. They are focused on the right priorities: improving teaching and learning, managing the behaviour of pupils and strengthening leadership and management across the school. There is a coherent structure supporting their improvement agenda. Regular review meetings are held, including the work of the raising attainment group (RAG), which has been instrumental in ensuring that governors, the local authority and other stakeholders are all involved and kept informed of the school's progress. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress against its priorities are written into a 'key dates' calendar to aid communication and ensure systematic review.
- Senior leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance is accurate. They know the school well and can demonstrate their impact across key areas of the school's work. Leaders also understand what needs to improve further. There are clear procedures in place to check on the quality of teaching, learning and the progress that all pupils make. Staff have benefited from individual coaching sessions and whole-school training sessions on improving elements of teaching and learning. This work has been strengthened further by focused coaching sessions developing aspects of the curriculum such as writing. Leaders and teachers are more aware of their own strengths and improvement priorities and the increasingly open culture of sharing ideas and practice has raised morale and boosted confidence. Work to implement the new national curriculum is well underway and resources are being purchased to facilitate aspects, such as the purchase of a new mathematics scheme.
- Senior leaders, middle leaders and staff have worked hard to respond positively to the findings of the previous inspection. They have addressed the weaknesses identified previously and show a clear and ambitious vision to make the school the best it can be. Senior leaders have developed an inclusive, welcoming school where the needs of pupils come first and teaching and learning is enjoyable and purposeful. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and standards have risen across the school.
- The recently appointed assistant headteacher has settled into school life quickly and his addition to the senior leadership team has further strengthened the impact of leadership across the school. He brings skills and experience that complement the work of current senior leaders. The senior leadership team is now a strong and supportive unit with a good capacity for further school improvement. Priorities are clearly focused and roles and responsibilities clearly defined with a greater sense of accountability. There is an improved sense of teamwork among middle and senior leaders including a willingness to try new things.
- Middle leaders have demonstrated their impact in moving the school forward. The heads of English, for example, have been resolute in their determination to improve the quality of pupils' writing across the school. This has included: training sessions for staff; the production of helpful guidance materials; offering advice to individual teachers and responding to queries; scrutinising pupils' work and monitoring quality generally.
- The leadership and organisation of special educational needs provision has been strengthened. Pupils requiring additional support are identified early and the support is organised well. In-class support is complemented by a learning mentor who works with particular pupils who require specialist support.
- Work to develop and embed the new primary national curriculum is well underway. Leaders are evaluating and reshaping the curriculum so that it better meets the needs of the pupils and, in doing so, are looking for gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. The curriculum is broad and balanced, as is reflected in the many inspiring displays around the school. Recently, as part of an ongoing exchange programme, a number of pupils from a linked French school spent the week at St Paul's – joining in lessons and fun sports activities.
- The primary school physical education and sports funding is used well to increase pupils' participation in sport, provide staff training and secure the services of a specialist sports coach. The school has recently organised a sports health and fitness week. The pupils commented how much they enjoyed this week and the additional facilities, including a climbing wall. Healthy eating at break and lunchtimes is also encouraged which, together with the emphasis on exercise, is helping pupils to lead healthier lifestyles.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well. Leaders work with a range of partners to broaden pupils' experiences of the world. Assemblies and class reflection times are used effectively to promote pupils' spirituality, moral understanding and social awareness. Additional activities include educational visits to places of interest, visiting groups, and after-school and lunchtime clubs. Pupils are developing a good understanding of tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. Pupils also enjoy taking

on responsibilities such as being prefects.

- Parents with whom inspectors spoke were extremely positive about the school, particularly commenting on the changes to the school, including new staff appointments. They commented that they feel their children are happy, safe and are progressing well.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school. It has helped leadership development by brokering the support of a mentor for the headteacher and links to leaders from other successful schools. It has worked with subject leaders and the head of the early years, reviewed the quality of teaching and learning and conducted a scrutiny of the work in pupils' books. Feedback from the local authority has helped leaders to shape professional development for teachers. A representative of the diocese visits the school regularly and offers well-considered support for the school's improvement agenda and longer term goals.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is significantly stronger and more effective now than was the case at the time of the previous inspection. The chair of the governing body, appointed just before the last inspection, leads the governors very effectively; she is knowledgeable about the school, understands the challenges it faces and has demonstrated her ability to strengthen its overall performance.
 - The external review of governance that took place after the last inspection was responded to meticulously by governors and their subsequent actions and rigorous monitoring of impact has strengthened leadership significantly. New governors have been appointed, including two members of the teaching staff, and this has fostered stronger governor–staff relationships as well as broadening the experience and the skill set of the whole governing body. The governors have demonstrated that they are able to hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance and also offer their support and encouragement.
 - The minutes of governing body meetings are sharp and evaluative. Reports are regularly produced by the chairs of the governing body's sub-committees and are systematically considered by the full governing body at their termly meetings.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding arrangements are well documented and procedures are robust. Staff and governors have received training and staff are well versed in how to keep children safe. Rigorous checks are completed on all new staff and regular visitors to the school and leaders ensure that records are kept up to date. Where children are potentially at risk, policies are closely adhered to and the school engages well with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers and support staff have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' learning. Both established staff and those who have joined the school more recently exhibit a real commitment and desire to do the best for the pupils. Teaching staff have worked collectively and collaboratively with subject and senior leaders to ensure that a determined focus has been maintained on improving learning in lessons.
- Learning is well planned and pupils understand the purpose of what is being taught. Teaching is lively, enthusiastic and enhanced by teachers' good questioning skills. Teachers usefully check that pupils understand what is being taught before moving on with new learning. Lessons are adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. Across subjects, the work provided for the pupils is effectively matched to their prior attainment and this includes the least, and most able.
- In lessons, the relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils are good and this helps the teaching to flow uninterrupted. Teachers are effective in motivating the pupils to listen well and contribute to question and answer sessions. Teachers set clear expectations of what is required to be attempted or completed by the end of lessons.
- The most effective teaching is in upper key stage 2. Here, teaching is very focused and helps pupils make significant gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Lessons are purposeful and pupils enjoy learning in different ways. Lessons are interesting and varied in their approach. Pupils get a real buzz out of learning; they want to do well. Teachers have fostered strong relationships between pupils enabling them to offer critical comments about the work of each other in a supportive and developmental way and this is accepted and understood.
- In most classes, there is a broad span of pupils' abilities, but due to improved teaching over time the work provided for them is better-matched to their needs. The most able, in particular, are being challenged more

because expectations have been raised. This can be seen in books and in displays which show a good quality of pupils' technical and imaginative writing.

- Classrooms as well organised learning environments have improved since the last inspection. There is consistency in the use of displays designed to support pupils' learning such as the 'working walls' for English and mathematics.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is highly effective and the school's policy is consistently applied across all classes. Teachers celebrate pupils' achievements and also provide them with helpful comments on how to improve their work. Those pupils who spoke with the inspectors said they really appreciated the comments that teachers took time to provide.
- The development of reading and writing skills is given a high priority in the school. Pupils have regular opportunities to read and they keep careful logs of the books they have read. Younger pupils commented that family members regularly listen to them read at home. Pupils who fall behind with their reading are identified early and are provided with effective one-to-one support by a teaching assistant. The quality of pupils' handwriting is good, as is the general presentation of pupils' work.
- Work in pupils' mathematics books shows that they have lots of opportunities to practise their calculation skills and develop their mathematical reasoning when solving problems. There is a high work rate evident in pupils' books and tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities. The pupils enjoy mathematics even when tasks challenge them, as shown in a Year 5 mathematics lesson where pupils persevered when converting percentages to fractions and to decimals.
- Teachers make frequent assessments of the pupils' progress and use their findings to identify any dips in performance. They adjust their teaching plans accordingly so that gaps in pupils' understanding are plugged. Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning; they are directed well by teachers and are clear about their role.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils with whom inspectors spoke commented that they feel safe in school and they enjoy their lessons. They regard school as a caring place, as illustrated by one pupil who said 'our teachers are very friendly and helpful'. Pupils also spoke about their awareness of keeping safe when using the internet and social media.
- Pupils know they can contact the school's learning mentor for additional help and support on any personal issues. The school has established a 'worry box' in each classroom to allow pupils to raise any concerns or worries they might have and these are responded to by the learning mentor. Parents are also aware of the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that bullying is very rare and when it does happen it tends to be name-calling, which staff deal with quickly and effectively. Pupils' knowledge of different kinds of bullying is strong, because the curriculum includes much work on promoting good relationships and nurturing pupils' positive attitudes towards each other. They are taught about different forms of bullying, such as racism, and around school there are several displays promoting respect and tolerance for all.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. The pupils are polite, courteous and continue to cope well with the intricacies of the school's building and split-level grounds. The pupils often hold doors open for visitors and politely say 'good morning' or 'good afternoon'. Pupils told the inspectors that aggressive behaviour, including fighting between pupils, is a thing of the past. The school's behaviour management system with its clear and consistently applied menu of rewards and sanctions is liked and appreciated by the pupils. Older pupils commented that school was a safe and friendly place to be; they know who to turn to should they need help and support from an adult. They say they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the school's good attendance figures.
- Break and lunchtimes are well organised and run smoothly. Supervision at breaktimes on the playgrounds is effective and teaching staff go outside to welcome pupils back into the building and ensure they re-enter the school in an orderly manner. The majority of pupils display positive attitudes. The work of the learning mentor is aimed at supporting those pupils with complex issues and this is having a positive impact, particularly in promoting stronger school to home relationships.

- Attendance has improved steadily and is now good.
- In all classes, around the school and outside on the playground, inspectors witnessed very positive behaviour. There have been a few fixed-term exclusions of pupils from school following instances of inappropriate behaviour but these are rare occurrences and the circumstances are well documented.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Senior leaders and governors have focused a lot of their attention and resources on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in school. As a result, pupils' overall achievement across the school has improved and their outcomes are good.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the national screening check for phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) at the end of Year 1 has improved from below the national average in 2013 to above average in 2015, when 80% of pupils reached the expected standard. Disadvantaged pupils do particularly well, achieving scores much higher than other similar pupils nationally. By the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils with a secure grasp of phonics is higher than the national figure. Pupils' reading skills, including those of the least able, are developing well.
- Assessments at the end of key stage 1 in 2015 showed a significant improvement on previous years' performance. Most pupils achieved the expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Their attainment was similar to the national average. The school is expecting achievement in all subjects in 2016 to be at least as strong as last year, if not better. This confidence is supported by inspection evidence.
- Following the dip in performance in 2013, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling has shown a continuous improving trend. Results in 2015 were broadly in line with the national average with the exception of mathematics which was above the national average. Pupils made good progress to achieve these results. The school's assessment records show an improved profile of achievement over time and the school is predicting results in 2016 to be at least as good as last year, if not better in some areas. Inspection evidence from lesson observations, a scrutiny of pupils' books and discussion with pupils about their work indicates that the school's expectations are realistic. This indicates good and improving progress over time.
- The school has improved its effectiveness in ensuring that most groups of pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs or disability and those who are disadvantaged, achieve well over time. In 2015, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics at the end of Year 6 was above that of their peers nationally. Current school records indicate that disadvantaged pupils across the school are continuing to make good progress.
- The most able pupils made at least the progress expected of them in reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar, and mathematics in 2015, but their progress was less strong in writing. In the 2015 national tests, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 was above other pupils nationally in mathematics, similar in reading, but below in writing. In grammar, punctuation and spelling the proportion of most-able pupils reaching the higher Level 5 was the same as the national average.
- At both key stages and across subjects, pupils are making stronger progress because the quality of teaching has improved and is more consistent. Progress is particularly strong when teachers foster successfully the pupils' attitudes to learning. There is good evidence of teachers encouraging pupils to support each other and also offer critical but friendly advice to make outcomes stronger. Year 4 pupils studying 'Macbeth' discussed in pairs how they could use conjunctives in their writing to explain events in the story. Similarly, Year 1 pupils were encouraged to work collaboratively when producing a tally chart of favourite flavours of crisps. Pupils made strong progress as a result of this combined effort. Pupils often use subject-specific vocabulary well.

Early years provision

is good

- The children entering the Reception classes have a broad span of knowledge and skills but, overall, these are typical for their age. The children make a positive start, settling in quickly to the classroom and its routines and activities. The setting is colourful, vibrant and staff are welcoming. The children are happy and enjoy learning and exploring the many opportunities provided for them.

- Teaching in the early years is good; it builds on children's interests and helps to develop their love of learning. The children enjoy working with phonics (letters and the sounds that they make). Teachers are skilled in teaching phonics.
- The two Reception classes share a common teaching space in which the teachers and support staff combine and work very well together. Resources are good and the teaching area is used well and imaginatively by teachers to structure and focus the children's learning in readiness for their transfer to key stage 1.
- Due to effective teaching and learning and a well-resourced and vibrant setting, children in the early years make good progress. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has improved since the time of the last inspection and is now above the national average. The proportion of children who are expected to achieve a good level of development in 2016 reflects a three-year pattern of continuous improvement.
- The outdoor provision is rather limited in size but the space is used well. The activities available develop the children's confidence in using different play equipment and learning resources which, in turn, helps to stimulate language and enhances their verbal communication skills. Teaching and support staff working alongside the children are very effective in motivating their interest.
- The development of children's early writing is a notable strength. The most able can form their letters correctly and can also write sentences that are phonetically plausible and easy to read. For example, one child writing about the story of the big bad wolf wrote unaided 'He sneet in to grammas hows'. Most children can count and write their numbers to ten correctly and the most able can count beyond this.
- On occasions, some of the independent activities provided for the children inside and outside of the classroom, where adults are not directly involved, are sometimes repetitive or the intended outcome is unclear and this results in some missed opportunities to extend the children's thinking and therefore their learning.
- Expectations of behaviour are high and adults help children to understand the importance of treating one another politely and with respect. As a consequence, children's behaviour is good. Children share resources and play and learn together harmoniously. They are effectively supervised by staff, who ensure that children are kept secure and safe while not hampering their imaginative play. Teaching promotes the importance of children listening carefully when information or instructions are being provided.
- The early years department has benefited from the support of an early years consultant. The early years manager has responded to this support very well and she leads the provision effectively. She uses regular assessments to track children's progress and ensure that teaching activities are planned to address any gaps in learning. Parents are kept well informed about how well their children are doing. Parents who have children attending the Reception classes were very appreciative of the staff and how they help their children to progress both in their learning and socially.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 106233 |
| Local authority | Tameside |
| Inspection number | 10012995 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 296 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jane Ratcliffe |
| Headteacher | Simon Wright |
| Telephone number | 0161 3382060 |
| Website | www.st-paulsstalybridge.co.uk |
| Email address | admin@st-pauls-stalybridge.tameside.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 5–6 February 2015 |

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British with a few pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- Pupils are taught in either single-year or mixed-year classes.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- When the school was inspected in February 2015 its overall effectiveness was found to be inadequate and the school was placed into special measures. Consequently, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, accompanied by Ofsted Inspectors, visited the school on four occasions to monitor the progress leaders and governors were taking to improve the school. During the fourth monitoring inspection, inspectors were of the opinion that the school was no longer inadequate and therefore deemed the inspection section 5 under the Education Act 2005. In reaching its judgements about the school, inspectors took into account evidence gathered during this inspection and the previous monitoring visits.
- During this inspection, inspectors observed the school at work including observing lessons in all classes.
- Two groups of pupils representing key stages 1 and 2 spoke to inspectors about their views of the school. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils during break and lunchtime, between lessons and in lessons themselves.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders, the business manager, the learning mentor, a governor and a representative from the local authority. A telephone discussion also took place with the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school, including at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and had informal discussions with them about their work.
- Inspectors had informal discussions with parents at the start and end of the school day. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to enable inspectors' analysis. Inspectors also spoke with parents informally before and after school.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including minutes from meetings of the governing body, information on pupils' outcomes, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its improvement planning. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| John Gornall, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Clare McGarey | Ofsted Inspector |

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