

St Paul's CofE (VC) First School

School Lane, Coven, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV9 5AD

Inspection dates

15–16 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have successfully improved the school since the last inspection. They have raised pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. These are both now good.
- Leaders have established a culture of high expectations for staff and pupils.
- The governing body has been effective in securing stability in leadership and staffing. This has enabled the school to improve rapidly.
- Pupils achieve well from their starting points. Pupils throughout the school make particularly rapid progress in reading and writing. Pupils are enthusiastic readers and enjoy writing in different styles.
- Most teaching interests and motivates pupils. Pupils learn well as a result. Pupils say that teaching has improved. One summed up the views of others when saying that 'learning is now more fun and we look forward to lessons more.'
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not as rapid as in reading and writing. There are not enough opportunities to deepen reasoning skills or develop mathematical skills in other subjects.
- The early years provision is good. Children get off to a good start to their learning. There has been a sustained improvement in children's outcomes which are now above average. The range of activities offered is not as interesting and stimulating outdoors as it is indoors.
- Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good, and improved since the last inspection. Pupils are good ambassadors for the values the school holds.
- Pupils are friendly, kind and respectful to others. Their attitudes to learning are positive.
- Attendance is above average and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen significantly.
- The school has a strong partnership with parents. Almost all are positive about all aspects of the school's work.
- Teachers' expectations for the most able pupils in mathematics are not always high enough. The lack of challenge in some tasks prevents pupils from developing their skills more rapidly and gaining a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts.
- The school has not yet provided enough training in mathematics for teaching assistants so that they can fully support pupils' mathematical learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in mathematics so that it matches the rapid progress in reading and writing by:
 - consistently setting high expectations for learning in mathematics, particularly for the most able
 - using more opportunities to deepen pupils' reasoning skills
 - providing times when pupils can apply their mathematical skills in other subjects
 - ensuring that teaching assistants receive support and training so that they fully understand their roles and can support pupils' learning in mathematics effectively.
- Further improve the quality of provision and the learning for children in the early years by providing a wider range of creative, stimulating activities outdoors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides visible, strong and determined leadership. She has built on the strong leadership provided by the former executive headteacher. Rapid action has been taken to tackle the areas requiring improvement at the last inspection and to drive the school forward. Consequently, all areas of the school have improved since the last inspection and are now good.
- Leaders have been successful in their efforts without losing sight of their core values of care, respect and tolerance. The school lives out its motto to 'Inspire, Achieve and Believe' based on the school's Christian values. An inclusive and very welcoming culture is at the heart of the school's ethos.
- The right priorities for development have been set by leaders over the last two years. All staff share the vision that pupils will 'become the best they can be'. Leaders now have much higher expectations of staff and pupils. Teachers are held to account for the progress of their pupils.
- Leaders have improved the way they check the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress. A systematic approach to evaluating the quality of teaching is in place. External support is used to confirm the school's own judgements. Leaders have eradicated weaker teaching.
- Senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the key priorities for further development, which inform school action plans. Following the last inspection, they prioritised actions to improve the teaching of phonics, reading and writing. Plans have now been drawn up to raise the quality of mathematics teaching to match that in reading and writing.
- Staff questionnaires and discussions show that a good team spirit has been created. Good-quality professional development has led to a confident, well-motivated staff. Leaders have provided good-quality training for teaching assistants in teaching skills in phonics. They have not yet provided enough support in helping them to be more effective in mathematics. Links with Doxey Primary School and the Wolgarston Collaboration of schools have helped significantly to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all year groups.
- Middle leaders, including subject leaders, are increasingly confident when making checks on pupils' learning. Programmes of support and development are in place so that teachers make improvements in a timely manner.
- Pupils' progress is tracked carefully. Regular checks on progress ensure that staff identify pupils who are not doing as well as they should. They give these pupils additional support to help them make better progress. As a result, different groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. Leaders are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all pupils.

- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used very effectively to reinforce the skills of teachers and pupils and, therefore, improve outcomes for pupils. Funding includes the provision of specialist sports coaches and a wider range of clubs than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils talk about how they now participate in competitions with other schools. They spoke animatedly about how Year 3 pupils won the recent South Staffordshire Schools tri-golf competition and how they have many more opportunities to attend sports clubs.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to support the small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school. It is used to provide additional adult support and to give pupils access to the full range of school activities. As a result, most achieve as well as their classmates.
- The school's curriculum has recently been reviewed in order to better meet pupils' interests, particularly those of boys. The introduction of topics such as 'Time Travellers' and 'Vicious Vikings' ensures that pupils are now more motivated and more interested in their work. Literacy skills are promoted well throughout the curriculum. However, there are not enough opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical skills in a range of subjects.
- The curriculum now provides more themed days and weeks to enable pupils to learn new skills. For example, the Roald Dahl week taking place during the inspection enabled Year 2 pupils to use charcoal and pastels to draw their own versions of 'Mr Twit'.
- A wider range of visits, visitors and lunchtime and after-school clubs has helped enrich the curriculum. Older pupils talked animatedly about how they had sung with other schools at the Genting Arena and how they had composed their own music during Music Day. Events such as these contribute effectively to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Their awareness of democracy is effectively developed through activities such as meeting their local MP and holding elections for members of the school council and house captains.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents were keen to tell the inspectors about how they feel the school has improved. One summed up the views of many with the comment: 'We have seen the school go from strength to strength. There is rapid improvement going on and a desire to make sure that all the children have a great experience.'
- The school has worked closely with the local authority and the former executive headteacher as consultant to improve all aspects of its work. The initial intensive support is no longer needed as the school's leaders now have the capacity to drive improvements themselves. The last monitoring visit by the local authority downgraded the school's category to one of low concern.

Governance of the school

- The governing body responded decisively and speedily to address the issues found at the previous inspection. By governors' own admission, they have had some hard decisions to make. They have not shied away from making some significant changes in order to stabilise leadership and stop the turbulence in the teaching staff.
- Governors provide effective support and challenge to the school. They hold leaders to account and are more involved in monitoring the school.

- Governors share the ambition and aspirations of leaders to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Governors are kept closely informed by senior leaders but have established thorough systems to check things out for themselves. The restructuring of roles has enabled governors to be linked with the school's action plans so they can monitor specific aspects of the school's work and report back in detail to the full governing body.
- Governors know the strengths and improvement areas of the school. They expect to see evidence of targets being met to agree with any recommendations for pay rises or promotion to sustain the improved picture of teaching and learning.
- Governors manage the school's finances and resources effectively. They measure the impact of spending, including the pupil premium and sport funding, on pupils' outcomes.
- The governing body meets all its statutory duties.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding is regarded as a high priority within the school. All staff receive regular training and know how to identify whether pupils are potentially at risk. Training is up to date and staff are well informed about the dangers of extremism, radicalisation and child exploitation. Policies are regularly updated and paperwork is detailed and robust. Effective relationships with other agencies ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs are well met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good and much improved since the last inspection when it was found to require improvement. Senior leaders and governors have taken effective action to address any weak teaching. The work in pupils' books and the school's own information show that teaching is now good over time.
- A strong feature of teaching is the purposeful atmosphere for learning, with teachers establishing positive working relationships with the pupils. Most adults expect much of pupils.
- Teachers take pride in their attractive and welcoming classrooms. Good-quality work is displayed in classrooms and around the school to celebrate pupils' success and show others what is possible. Parents say that the setting of homework has improved. It is now more consistent and reinforces and extends work covered in lessons.
- Teaching is based on good subject knowledge. Teachers use well-targeted questioning that probes and extends pupils' thinking. They value pupils' answers and are mostly skilled at building on pupils' responses.
- Teachers plan activities which engage pupils' interest. For example, in Year 4, pupils were asked to write a book review based on the book 'The Twits'. They were motivated by sharing part of the teacher's own review and then discussing how it could be improved. This led to pupils showing good engagement and maturity in writing their own reviews.

- Good-quality training has resulted in the teaching of reading being a strength of the school. Effective phonics teaching ensures that younger pupils secure the key skills they need to read and write successfully from a young age. Reading is taught well so that pupils enjoy books and learn how to read confidently. Younger pupils and less proficient readers read to an adult a number of times a week, building their confidence as well as their reading skills. The most able readers in Year 4 are able to discuss a range of authors; they read fluently, accurately and with expression. A real love of reading is fostered because of the high profile given to reading.
- The teaching of literacy is much improved since the last inspection. Pupils' work shows many examples of teachers setting challenging tasks in literacy, enabling pupils to explore different texts and writing styles and to develop their literacy skills across different subjects. The most able pupils are well challenged to improve their sentences and use a wide range of vocabulary and punctuation.
- The teaching of literacy is stronger than in mathematics. This is because until recently much professional development has centred on developing literacy. Teachers do not always set high enough expectations for pupils' learning in mathematics, particularly for the most able pupils. Pupils themselves say that sometimes, 'maths challenges' are too easy. At times, teachers miss the opportunity to deepen pupils' reasoning skills.
- Teachers have become accustomed to the school's new arrangements for assessing pupils' progress. They regularly check how well pupils are doing. Teachers use the assessment information effectively and the majority challenge pupils appropriately. Through regular meetings with school leaders, teachers identify any pupils in danger of slipping behind and then develop effective strategies to help them catch up quickly.
- Teachers give clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and pupils respond well to this. In discussions pupils say that they enjoy getting feedback in their review time and feel that this helps them 'get better at our work.'
- In literacy lessons teaching assistants provide good support for pupils. Their subject knowledge has been raised so that they are now fully involved in phonics teaching. They provide good support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. They carefully explain the tasks and clarify any misunderstandings. In mathematics though, teaching assistants are not as effective in the levels of challenge they provide for individuals or small groups because they have not had enough training and their roles are not always clear. As a consequence, some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. All parents spoken to and those who responded to the online survey, Parent View, confirmed that they feel their children are happy and safe in school.

- Pupils thrive in a happy, caring environment where their welfare and safety are paramount. All parents feel that their children are well cared for. Pupils are friendly, well mannered and respectful to visitors, staff and other pupils. Pupils are very proud of their school and are very positive about all aspects of school life. They say that they are really pleased with how the school has improved. Parents feel that the higher expectations staff now have have resulted in the pupils themselves having higher expectations of what they can do.
- Pupils enjoy their time in school and have positive attitudes to learning. They talk enthusiastically about what they learn. They feel that the buddy puppets, pictures and stickers which represent learning challenges, such as resilience, help pupils improve their behaviour and attitude towards learning.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and show a good understanding of how to stay safe. They say that there is always an adult they can go and talk to if they are worried.
- Pupils say that occasionally there is 'a little bit of bullying.' They say that this is quickly dealt with and the school's records confirm this.
- Pupils enjoy their responsibilities in school and take them seriously, such as council members, worship leaders or house captains.
- Pupils are well supported to keep healthy through a wide range of sporting activities and clubs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- This is the case in lessons and around the school and contributes to the orderly and harmonious community within the school.
- Pupils, staff and parents agree that behaviour is good in school. The school's records confirm this.
- Pupils feel that the school's new behaviour system is fair and easily understood. They enjoy the rewards, such as points, stickers and certificates, and feel that sanctions are fair. Consistent implementation of this system by staff, and their high expectations for behaviour, contribute to pupils' positive behaviour.
- All groups of pupils enjoy school and their attendance is above average. Since the last inspection a range of strategies has been put in place to reduce the number of pupils who are persistent absentees. The aim has been to help parents understand the impact that attendance has on the progress that pupils make. This has resulted in a significant fall in the number of pupils who stay away from school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils have improved since the last inspection. All groups of pupils are now making good progress from their starting points. Standards of attainment have risen over the last two years. More pupils are on track to achieve and exceed the expectations for their age. This is because of changes to the curriculum and the improving quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

- There has been an improved trend over time in national assessments in Year 2 since 2013. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected level has risen and was above the national average for reading, writing and mathematics in 2015. An above-average proportion of pupils attained above the expected level in all three subjects. Unvalidated figures for 2016 show that this good attainment has been repeated in 2016.
- Progress of current pupils is good. Work in pupils' books and school information show that progress continues to be good through Years 3 and 4 so that pupils are well prepared for middle school. All groups are making good progress from their different starting points. More pupils are on track to exceed age-related expectations. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Progress in mathematics, however, is not yet accelerating as rapidly as that in reading and writing.
- Progress in reading is a strength of the school. Younger pupils apply their phonics skills effectively to help them read unfamiliar words and complete their writing. They are confident in reading increasingly difficult words.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening has risen over the last three years. In 2015, the proportion rose to above the national average for the first time. In 2016, all pupils attained the expected level. All girls and almost all boys achieve the required level by the end of Year 2. This represents at least good progress from pupils' starting points on entry. It is a result of the consistent and accurate teaching of phonics and additional interventions put in place for any pupils at risk of falling behind.
- In recent years, there has been a gap between the attainment of girls and boys. Although boys often attained above boys nationally, there was a large gap between their attainment and that of the girls in their class. This gap is now diminishing rapidly. In some classes there is now no gap at all.
- The most able pupils generally make similar progress to that of other pupils in school. Occasionally, in some mathematics lessons, work provided does not always challenge them or help deepen their understanding. This means that they do not always meet their full potential.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive close support from adults to ensure that all are secure in their learning. Consequently, they make good progress.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged and are therefore supported by additional government funding make progress similar to that of other pupils in the school. There are too few disadvantaged pupils in each year group to make any reliable comment on their attainment.

Early years provision

Good

- Provision in the early years is now good and has improved significantly since the last inspection.

- Children enter the Nursery or Reception classes with skills and knowledge that are generally typical for their age. They make at least good progress from their starting points. The proportion attaining a good level of development at the end of Reception has risen significantly over the last three years. An above-average number of children attained a good level of development in 2015 and 2016. Children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- The good leadership of the headteacher and the early years leader has led to improved provision for children. Leaders know the strengths of the provision and what needs to be done to further improve children's learning experiences.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Staff keep a close check on children's progress. They identify the needs of individual children. They then take appropriate steps to ensure that the children's needs are met effectively. Accurate assessment of children's learning is built up in their individual learning journey records.
- Classrooms are lively, stimulating places. Well-prepared, structured tasks and activities that children can choose for themselves ensure that they are engaged well in their learning. Nursery children were observed using mirrors to paint self-portraits. They were eager to talk about parts of their face and adults helped to extend their vocabulary. Staff use good questioning to move children's learning on. Opportunities to develop early reading, writing and mathematical skills are threaded expertly through the indoor provision.
- Currently the outdoor provision is not as stimulating as that indoors. It does not offer as many opportunities for children to be creative, learn or explore a wide range of activities.
- Phonics is taught effectively in the early years. Reception children make effective use of their 'Freddy Frog' puppet to help them blend letters together to make simple words.
- Staff provide a calm, nurturing environment. New children were observed settling quickly into school routines and relating well to the adults around them.
- The school works hard to engage parents in their child's learning. Good transition arrangements ensure that children and parents are well supported for their entry into school. Parents are encouraged to share information about their child's learning and development at home. Children's progress information is regularly shared with parents. Regular workshops are held and help provide strong links with parents.
- Adults ensure that children are safe and well cared for. Children are confident in approaching any adult if they are upset or have a concern. Leaders carry out regular risk assessments to check that the environment is safe for children. Children's welfare is given a high priority. As a result, children are happy, confident and enjoy school.

School details

Unique reference number	124245
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10020024

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	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Picken
Headteacher	Karen Roberts
Telephone number	01902 790253
Website	www.stpaulscoven.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-pauls-coven.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time. Children in the Nursery class attend for mornings only.

- Since the last inspection, the previous headteacher left the school in April 2015. The headteacher from Doxey Primary School became the executive headteacher from May to December 2015. The deputy headteacher became acting headteacher and was subsequently appointed as the school's substantive headteacher in April 2016. The executive headteacher has acted as a consultant to the school. There have been a significant number of teaching staff changes since the last inspection.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs are run by external providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons across all year groups. Six of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, either in lessons or as a separate activity.
- Meetings took place with staff, pupils and governors. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 13 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and eight written comments. Parents were also spoken to at the start of the school day. The school's own last parent questionnaire was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered the views of five staff who completed the staff questionnaire and 11 pupils who completed the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors attended an assembly, heard pupils read and observed break- and lunchtime behaviour. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including: the school's own information on pupils' learning and progress; the school's own check on its performance; planning and monitoring documents; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

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