

# St Paul's School

Hertford Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 8NJ

## Inspection dates

6–8 June 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The high turnover of staff has slowed the rate of improvement since the last inspection. Leaders have not fully ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Teaching sometimes fails to motivate pupils to learn. Individual learning targets and information technology are not used well enough to support pupils' progress. Where there is a focus on task completion, rather than on what is to be learned, pupils lose interest and their progress slows.
- Opportunities for teachers to improve their practice by observing outstanding teaching are limited.
- Currently vocational opportunities to meet pupils' needs are limited.
- Opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure are not planned systematically.
- The analysis and use of assessment information are not used well enough to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Assessment measures do not reflect changes in the national curriculum.
- Pupils' preparedness and attitudes to learning in lessons and sometimes their behaviour require improvement.

### The school has the following strengths

- Over the last 12 months, trustees have reviewed the future of the school and taken a positive decision to improve the school by investing in high-quality staff, improving the fabric of the school and expanding the vocational curriculum. This is beginning to have a positive impact upon the provision.
- The new headteacher has brought about substantial improvement since her appointment. There is a clear sense of direction and the school is improving well. Improvements in teaching and pupils' behaviour are gaining momentum.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Nearly all say that they enjoy lessons and all aspects of school. They recognise the improvements in their social and academic development.
- Staff are highly committed and enthusiastic and go 'above and beyond' for pupils. They fully support the headteacher and are keen to secure further improvements.
- Those parents spoken to are equally positive about the changes they have seen in the school over the last year.
- There are increasing pockets of good teaching.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

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

- Improve teaching and learning, so that they are consistently good by:
  - ensuring that learning engages pupils more effectively in lessons
  - having sharper individual learning objectives to accelerate pupils' progress
  - developing assessment arrangements which align with the new national curriculum and using this information to inform future teaching
  - providing more opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding teaching to improve their practice.
- Accelerate pupils' progress by:
  - developing and extending vocational opportunities, to better suit the needs of pupils
  - providing systematic planned opportunities for pupils to read.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes by setting higher expectations for pupils in class, so that they are better prepared for learning and that exclusions reduce over time

### The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Although almost all independent school standards are met, the leadership has not ensured that the standard relating to an admission register has been met, as the register does not record where leavers move on to.
- The high turnover of staff has restricted the pace of school improvement since the last inspection. This has led to a lack of continuity, particularly of teaching staff and some key support staff. This in turn has led to weaknesses in some aspects of the school, for example in relation to the assessment of pupils' progress. The analysis and use of assessment information are not used well enough by teachers to inform future teaching. The school continues to use measures of progress which no longer apply.
- The relatively new headteacher has set the school on a clear path of improvement and has created a more ambitious culture. Over the last year, positive changes have been implemented and are having an increasing beneficial impact in securing improvements in both teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour. Relationships with local schools to provide support and advice to assist them with improvements have been helpful. Relationships with the local authority and parents and carers have strengthened. There is good capacity for further improvement with the strong senior leadership team in place, supported by more effective trustees.
- The headteacher has recognised the limitations of the current vocational curriculum. Pupils benefit from what is already in place, but could do more with expanded opportunities. The headteacher is keen for this to happen both on and off the school site, to include more land-based and construction accredited courses.
- The school's self-evaluation is an honest appraisal of the current state of development of the school and highlights appropriate priorities for further improvement. Improvements in teaching have led to some pockets of good practice, although the headteacher is aware that this is not yet consistent.
- The school improvement plan focuses on appropriate areas for further development, such as improving the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' behaviour across the school.
- The headteacher enjoys the confidence of the staff, who feel that the school is improving well. Staff recognise the positive changes that have been implemented.
- Parents spoken to recognise improvements, in terms of more effective home-school liaison. There has been a concerted focus on contacting parents with positive messages to encourage and boost pupils' self-esteem. One parent commented of her son, 'He has excelled academically since being at this school.'
- The school actively teaches British values both through the curriculum and through events, visits and visiting speakers. Aspects of British and other cultures are celebrated with food and music. Pupils are appropriately prepared for life in modern Britain. They show an increased understanding of tolerance and respect for people of different backgrounds and lifestyles. The school is vigilant in ensuring that all pupils have equality of opportunity and that no one is subject to any form of discrimination.
- The headteacher has introduced more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. Underperformance of teachers is tackled and teachers benefit from constructive

feedback to improve their practice.

- Pupils receive appropriate careers education and guidance and they have good access to work-related opportunities, such as in motor vehicle maintenance, which they enjoy and that prepare them well for the future.

## **Governance**

- The trustees have carefully considered the future of the school and have taken a strategic decision to invest more resources, with a view to improving all aspects of the school. They recognise that there is much work to do. They have improved the quality of staffing, particularly in the senior leadership team and subject teaching. Improvements have been made to the learning environment and a sensory room is planned to help manage pupils' behaviour more effectively.
- Trustees have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in pupils' behaviour and of teaching and learning. They are highly committed to the school becoming successful. They have provided effective support to the senior leadership team through regular meetings both formally and informally. They are becoming increasingly effective in holding the school to account and driving up standards. A member of the trustee board is appropriately trained in safeguarding.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding to ensure that pupils are safe and protected. Often issues outside school impinge on the well-being of pupils and staff make every effort to resolve these issues.
- Staff are knowledgeable about all form of safeguarding. They receive regular training to keep themselves up to date, so that they are better able to identify potential concerns. The designated safeguarding leads are appropriately trained at a higher level and re-train every two years. Staff are vigilant to ensure that changes in pupils' behaviour and demeanour can be quickly addressed.
- The school works closely with parents, carers and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and supported. Appropriate risk assessments are in place.
- The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and reflects the latest guidance. It is available on the school's website for parents to read.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- The lack of consistency of teaching staff over time has had a negative impact on the quality of teaching. There are not enough opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding teaching in order to improve their own practice. There are examples of good teaching, but this is not yet consistent across the school.
- When lessons focus on worksheet completion and too much talk by adults, there are too few opportunities for pupils to be actively engaged in their learning. Pupils often complete written work by hand. They are given too few opportunities to use information

technology to motivate them. Computers are not used widely enough for pupils to record their work in more creative ways.

- Staff know their pupils well and use flexible approaches to meet individual needs effectively. Positive relationships, the sensitive management of pupils' behaviour and the use of praise and encouragement are beginning to improve pupils' often previous negative views of education. As a result, pupils' enjoyment of learning and expectations of what they can achieve are starting to increase.
- Pupils engage well in learning when teachers use interesting subject matter, bringing learning to life for pupils. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were able to work out percentages when these were linked to familiar video games.
- In English, teachers are beginning to provide well-thought-out tasks. For instance, pupils develop persuasive writing techniques to justify the use of CCTV or animal captivity. Work scrutiny shows improvements in the quantity and quality of writing over time.
- Teaching boosts pupils' self confidence, particularly when they are able to achieve accreditation or qualifications for their achievements.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement as expectations by staff are not high enough. For example, pupils sit in lessons with coats on and bags on the table unchallenged.
- Pupils benefit from a strong pastoral support system. Pupils are allocated to a family tutor group, where older pupils mentor younger pupils. Daily pastoral meetings help pupils to address areas of concern and help to reduce barriers to learning.
- End-of-day assemblies help pupils to reflect on the day. The promotion of positive behaviour of pupils through use of a variety of rewards such as points, stars and certificates and phone calls home to praise pupils' behaviour and achievements is starting to improve their self-esteem.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that any bullying is acted upon quickly and effectively by staff.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum, for example when online and by following health and safety rules in food technology.
- The school council has been involved in identifying school values which align well with British values. Through visits and events, pupils develop an understanding of British values and enjoy trips to local places of interest to enrich their experiences.
- The personal, social and health education programme and other aspects of the curriculum promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour is not yet consistently good. One pupil aptly commented that behaviour is 'up and down' and currently, exclusions are high for some pupils.
- Staff's focus on boosting pupils' self-esteem and confidence through the use of praise and motivation is gradually paying dividends.
- Although pupils' attendance is below average, it is improving well and for many it is the first time they have attended school for a sustained period of time.
- Disruptions to learning through poor behaviour are kept to a minimum and pupils learn how to self-manage their behaviour more appropriately.
- Behaviour at lunchtime has improved with the introduction of 'family' groupings, so that these are more sociable occasions.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Requires improvement**

- Pupils have previously experienced a disrupted education, and many have had significant time out of school. Their attainment is often below average on entry.
- Not enough pupils make sustained good progress. Progress is strongest in English and mathematics, but weaker in science. The school has developed a measure for good progress, but not enough pupils achieve this.
- Learning objectives in lessons are not personalised or sharp enough for pupils to accelerate their learning. This means that often the most able pupils are not stretched in lessons as well as they could be.
- The most able pupils read a wide genre of texts confidently and fluently. However, others struggle with reading and have low literacy levels and do not have enough practice to improve their skills. Opportunities for reading and enjoying reading are not systematically planned so that pupils develop a love of books and develop their literacy skills.
- Work in pupils' books is in line with their capabilities and work is presented to a good standard and is starting to show improved standards and progress. Regular and consistent marking helps pupils to know how to further improve their work.
- By the end of key stage 4, some of the most able pupils achieve level 2 qualifications in basic skills. The majority of pupils achieve entry-level qualifications in mathematics and vocational qualifications in subjects such as work skills, sport and leisure. Pupils enjoy practical subjects such as food technology, art and motor vehicle maintenance.
- Pupils are effectively prepared for life after school, with most leavers progressing to positive destinations such as training or vocational courses at local or regional colleges.

## School details

Unique reference number	135208
DfE registration number	330/6115
Inspection number	10033570

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.

Type of school	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	St Paul's Community Development Trust
Chair	Pat Wing
Headteacher	Kerenza Palmer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,000 (dependent on need)
Telephone number	0121 464 4376
Website	<a href="http://www.stpaulstrust.org.uk">www.stpaulstrust.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:administration@stpaulstrust.org.uk">administration@stpaulstrust.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	14–16 April 2015

## Information about this school

- St Paul's opened in March 2007 and is registered for 100 pupils, aged between nine and 19 years. The school provides places for pupils who have been excluded from school, are at risk of exclusion, or do not have a school place.
- The school is part of the St Paul's Community Development Trust. The trust has a children's centre, a nursery provider and out-of-school provision on site, with a further pre-school and other nursery providers in the locality as part of its wider work. These are all separately inspected.
- The school's last full inspection was in April 2015, when most aspects were judged to require improvement, although all the independent school standards were met.
- Most pupils are funded by Birmingham local authority. The vast majority have social,

emotional and mental health difficulties.

- The current headteacher took over the school in September 2016.
- There has been a considerable turnover in staff, although this has now stabilised.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers or receive additional funding in the form of the pupil premium grant.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed seven parts of lessons, all of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Pupils' work, surveys, annual reports and other records were scrutinised.
- The school's documentation was examined, including planning for subjects, and records of pupils' progress and the welfare and safeguarding of pupils. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- The views of pupils were sought through individual discussions.
- There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View, but the inspector held discussions with parents either face to face or over the telephone.

## Inspection team

Frank Price, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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