

St Paul's

73 Hertford Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 8NJ

Inspection dates

9 to 11 July 2019

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are continuing to improve the provision and have ensured that the independent school standards are met. The headteacher is effective. However, governors do not always provide her with sufficient support and challenge.
- Leaders extended their offer to include key stage 2 provision in January 2019. This has become quickly established and is providing pupils with a good quality of education.
- Leaders have introduced a broad curriculum with a range of vocational courses. However, in its current form it limits opportunities for the most able to achieve higher-level qualifications.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Lessons are well structured and enable pupils to build up their knowledge over time. Teachers make good use of classroom resources.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress but do not routinely use this information to help them to plan and provide further learning. In mathematics, the work is too easy for some pupils.
- All pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and all are disadvantaged. Outcomes for pupils are good, particularly in English and vocational subjects.
- Reading is promoted across the school. However, pupils in key stage 2 are sometimes given books to read that are too easy for them.
- Leaders and staff manage pupils' behaviour well and the rate of exclusion is falling. Leaders promote respect and tolerance and intervene appropriately and effectively if a pupil becomes distressed.
- Attendance is improving. However, when pupils return to school following a period of absence, teachers do not provide them with opportunities to catch up on the work they have missed.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show respect for people from different faiths and cultures.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They receive independent and impartial careers advice.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers consider assessment information in order to meet pupils' needs and abilities more effectively
 - pupils have opportunities to catch up on the work they have missed.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - they have opportunities to study suitably challenging programmes of study in key stage 4
 - pupils in key stage 2 are provided with suitably challenging reading material.
- Ensure governors provide appropriate support and challenge for school leaders.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders are passionate about ensuring that pupils who have found mainstream education difficult have another chance to be successful in their education. As a result of their hard work and tenacity, leaders have created a school that now provides a good quality of education.
- Leaders identified the need for additional provision in key stage 2, and in January 2019 opened a primary school site. In a short space of time, this new provision has become established. The pupils attending the school have settled well and are already making progress.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They evaluate what is working well and what they need to do to improve. Since the previous inspection, leaders have addressed the areas for improvement with varying degrees of success. The school now meets all of the independent school standards, pupils' behaviour has improved, and the quality of teaching learning and assessment is now good. Leaders acknowledge that there is more to do around teachers' use of assessment.
- Leaders have introduced a new curriculum that includes an extensive range of vocational courses. Pupils now have access to courses in construction, motor vehicle maintenance and sport as well as English and mathematics functional skills. The majority of pupils are benefiting from this change, with many excelling in their preferred vocational area. However, for some, including the most able, the change has limited their opportunities to acquire higher-level qualifications. For example, pupils can no longer study GCSE English or mathematics.
- Staff turnover was previously high but this has now reduced. Teachers and other staff enjoy working at the school. They feel valued and supported by leaders. They share leaders' passion for the school and are united in their desire to help pupils succeed.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continually, through the curriculum and through the trips and activities they offer. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions and have recently completed a study of Islam. Leaders are quick to seize opportunities to develop pupils socially. They seek to encourage debate, discussion and teamwork when they can.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Through physical, social, health and economic (PSHE) and citizenship lessons, pupils learn about individual liberty and the rule of law. This work is reinforced through assemblies, activities and off-site visits. A democratically elected school council meets each Friday, and during a recent assembly about Nelson Mandela, pupils learned about equality and freedom.
- All pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Leaders ensure that the additional funding they receive is used effectively to provide a broad and varied curriculum and opportunities that will enhance pupils' experience of school.

Governance

- Governors are committed and passionate about supporting and helping the pupils and

families the school serves.

- Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Members of the board have undertaken safer recruitment training. The chair of governors is the designated safeguarding governor.
- Governors have appointed competent and effective leaders who are industrious and ambitious for all pupils. Since the previous inspection, governors have relied heavily on leaders to bring about the changes that were required, without always providing them with high-quality support or challenge. Governors have not held the headteacher to account sufficiently.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a safeguarding policy that is published on the school's website.
- Leaders ensure that staff are appropriate to work with children. They conduct all necessary pre-employment checks and record this information in a single central record.
- A comprehensive training programme is in place to ensure that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know what they must do to keep pupils safe. Staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction when they are first employed at the school and this is refreshed frequently. Staff have received training in the use of reasonable force and use de-escalation techniques appropriately and effectively.
- Staff are quick to report safeguarding concerns to the designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead is equally quick to respond to concerns, including accessing early help when necessary.
- Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of each pupil's circumstances and their specific needs. They maintain accurate and up-to-date files and work very well with external agencies.
- The pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have recently introduced a new curriculum that includes a wide range of vocational topics that are successfully engaging pupils in their learning.
- Teachers set high expectations of behaviour and conduct in lessons. Pupils respect this and attend on time with the correct equipment and are ready to learn. Leaders and teachers have worked hard to ensure that poor behaviour does not interrupt learning.
- Lessons are well planned in key stage 2. Teachers ensure that learning is well sequenced and builds on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. During the inspection, pupils were learning about the production of chocolate. They had recently visited a local chocolate factory and were discovering the origins of cocoa, before making their own chocolate products. These activities also required pupils to use and apply their reading and mathematical knowledge and skills effectively.
- Teachers in key stage 2 ensure that the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently and those who require additional support receive it. This is most effective in pupils' writing,

which is leading to them making good progress. However, they do not match reading books to pupils' abilities sufficiently to provide a relevant level of challenge.

- In key stages 3 and 4, teachers use their good subject knowledge to provide lessons that engage pupils. They use classroom resources well, including information technology, and deploy teaching assistants effectively. However, teachers do not always consider pupils' abilities well enough. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics, where pupils often work on the same tasks regardless of their ability. The work in pupils' books indicates that some pupils find the work too easy and are not challenged sufficiently.
- Teachers use questioning effectively in lessons to check pupils' understanding. They assess pupils' knowledge regularly, but they do not yet use assessment information to inform their delivery sufficiently.
- A minority of pupils are persistently absent from school. When they miss a lesson, they are not always given the opportunities they need to catch up with the work they have missed. This leads to gaps in their knowledge and limits their progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and staff promote pupils' personal development and welfare through the curriculum, assemblies and extra-curricular activities. The curriculum includes citizenship and PSHE lessons. Pupils learn to take responsibility for themselves. The pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they particularly enjoyed learning about money management.
- The curriculum has been carefully designed to prepare pupils for life beyond school, with a strong emphasis on employability. Pupils have taken part in curriculum vitae writing workshops and are encouraged to consider what they want to do when they finish their education. Pupils show ambition, with some telling inspectors that they wanted to work in construction, architecture and the information technology industries.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Pupils have access to a range of sports, including boxing and swimming, which they do at a local gym and swimming pool. Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of pupils' individual needs and seek to build self-esteem and self-confidence. There are appropriate systems in place to support pupils when they are experiencing difficulties and pupils feel comfortable talking to staff when they feel upset or distressed. Leaders promote equality and are quick to tackle bullying. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare in school, but, when relationships do break down, teachers are quick to help restore them.
- Leaders are aware of the potential risks for pupils outside school, for example knife crime and the dangers associated with using the internet. Leaders talk about these dangers and help pupils to make good choices when outside and online.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Bright and vibrant displays adorn classroom and corridor walls promoting diversity and equality. Pupils are provided with a range of interesting experiences. This year pupils have enjoyed a visit to RAF Cosford to learn about the role of the armed forces in keeping the country safe and have received first aid skills training. Pupils' efforts to support the local

community were recognised when they were awarded the runner-up prize in a city-wide citizenship competition. Pupils received a financial reward, which they have used to create a sensory garden on the primary school site to benefit the local community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good
- All of the pupils on roll have been referred by the local authority, either because they have been excluded from school or were at risk of exclusion from school. Many of the pupils had very low attendance in their previous school with some refusing to attend. Leaders have set ambitious attendance targets and pupils' attendance is much improved. Most pupils travel to school by taxi and arrive punctually.
- Pupils respect the school building, staff and each other. They wear their school uniform with pride and show an appreciation of the way leaders and staff seek to support and help them.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They are respectful to their teachers and other staff and show a commitment to learning. The pupils who spoke to inspectors said that the new range of vocational subjects has helped them to engage because the topics are more interesting.
- Staff intervene appropriately and effectively when they need to de-escalate situations when a pupil becomes distressed.
- The pupils who spoke to inspectors showed a good level of maturity and self-awareness. They told inspectors that occasionally comments are misinterpreted by themselves and others because they do not always have the social skills to understand or appreciate them. Pupils told inspectors that staff were helping them with this.
- Leaders have introduced an effective behaviour policy. The policy is reviewed regularly to ensure that it is fit for purpose. The new behaviour policy promotes restorative justice and has been introduced at the same time as the school's new therapy dog, Simba. As a result of leaders' actions, behaviour is continuing to improve. Exclusion from school is used rarely and rates of exclusion have fallen significantly this year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- All pupils in the school have an EHC plan and all are disadvantaged. Many of the pupils have experienced turbulence during their schooling, with many missing much of their education prior to joining the school. As a result of leaders' actions to improve the curriculum and the good quality of teaching, outcomes for pupils are now good.
- Pupils in key stage 2 study the national curriculum. Although the school only opened in January 2019, there are signs that pupils are making progress in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are developing good mathematical skills in key stage 2. Mathematics is taught as a discrete subject but is also woven through the rest of the curriculum. For example, pupils demonstrated an ability to weigh and measure ingredients accurately during a cooking lesson.
- Pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure and the majority are developing into capable

readers. There are opportunities to read every day in class and pupils read with an adult once a week. There is a range of reading materials for pupils to choose from, including newspapers and magazines. Pupils are not making as strong progress in reading because they are sometime given books that are too easy for them.

- Many of the pupils in key stages 3 and 4 have missed significant amounts of schooling and, consequently, their attainment overall is low. However, their attainment is showing signs of consistent improvement. Pupils study English and mathematics functional skills at key stage 4. In 2018, all pupils achieved the target grades set for them by school leaders. Leaders acknowledge that the targets may not have been ambitious enough for some. They are also aware that the current curriculum is restricting the more able from excelling in the way they could.
- Pupils make stronger progress in English than mathematics. When mathematics is challenging, a small number of pupils become reluctant to participate. Teachers tend to keep mathematics within pupils' comfort zones to ensure participation, but this prevents some pupils from making as much progress as they could.
- Pupils enjoy studying a range of vocational subjects, including motor vehicle studies, construction and money management, and they are making good progress in these subjects. Pupils told inspectors that the knowledge and skills they had acquired were helping them to decide what they wanted to do for a career.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training. In 2018, all pupils who left the school went on to appropriate college placements or apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	135208
DfE registration number	330/6115
Inspection number	10092452

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	St Paul's Community Trust
Chair	Patrick Wing
Headteacher	Kerenza Palmer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,000 (dependent on need)
Telephone number	0121 464 4376
Website	www.stpaulstrust.org.uk
Email address	administration@stpaulstrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 June 2017

Information about this school

- St Paul's School is a small special school catering for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils are referred to the school by Birmingham Local Authority's special educational needs assessment and review team. The school is located in the Balsall Heath area of Birmingham and admits pupils from age 5 to 19. Currently there are no pupils in the sixth form.
- The school is part of the St Paul's Community Development Trust. The trust operates a children's centre, nursery and out-of-school play services. These centres and services are inspected separately.

- The school's last full inspection was in June 2017.
- Following a material change inspection in June 2018, the school now accommodates pupils in key stage 2. The key stage 2 provision opened in January 2019 on a separate site approximately 500 meters from the main school. Currently there are 11 pupils on roll in key stage 2.
- Currently there are only boys in key stages 3 and 4, whereas key stage 2 is mixed. All pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.
- A small number of pupils attend off-site alternative provision at the Southside Training Centre. They have not been referred to in this report as to do so would risk identifying them.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons to observe teaching and learning across a range of subjects in key stages 2, 3 and 4. Most of these observations were undertaken jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' learning over time through scrutiny of work in their books and folders.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences at the school and listened to pupils in key stage 2 read.
- Meetings were held with leaders to discuss their evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the impact of their work. Inspectors met with members of staff to discuss their experiences of the school.
- Inspectors met with a group of governors to discuss the independent school standards and their role in leading and managing the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding records and procedures, curriculum plans, behaviour records and attendance information.
- Inspectors toured both school sites with leaders to check that the accommodation and facilities met the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered the three responses received to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and 17 responses to the survey for staff. There were no responses to the pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Niall Gallagher, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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