

Inspection of a good school: St Paul's Infant School

Hillary Road, Maidstone, Kent ME14 2BS

Inspection dates:

14–15 January 2020

Outcome

St Paul's Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly and welcoming school. Pupils' smiling faces as they come to school, and throughout the day, show that they are happy to be there. They enjoy learning and are excited to discover new things. Many parents and carers commented on how happy their children are to come to a school where there is a strong sense of community and a family feeling.

Pupils feel safe and secure. They know that adults in the school are ready to help them when they need it. Pupils are kind and caring and help each other out. Pupils live and learn by the school's values which underpin all that the school does. Pupils know that bullying is unkind behaviour but are not worried about it as they say it does not happen in school. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and pupils respond very well to all the adults.

Leaders are ambitious for all the pupils, who are nurtured and thrive in school. Pupils learn and achieve well. They work hard and try their best. Teachers take pupils' interests into account when they plan lessons. The diversity of languages and cultures is celebrated so that all pupils are valued and respected.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school motto of 'Everybody achieving, believing, succeeding ... together' is very evident throughout the school. Pupils play and learn well together. Senior leadership is strong and inspiring and has made sure that the school has improved. There is a strong team of dedicated and talented leaders and teachers who, in their own words, said: 'This is a really happy place, we are a family. We are valued, trusted, and feel we have opportunities to develop our skills and expertise.'

Children get off to a positive start in the Reception classes. They enjoy learning and playing inside and outside. Adults are skilled at talking to children to help them to develop their speech and language and their understanding. There is a close focus on developing

children's early mathematics as well as their early reading and writing skills.

A new curriculum was introduced last year. It is planned so that meaningful links are made across the different subjects. This ensures that learning is purposeful. Curriculum plans provide a clear overview so that teachers know what to teach and when.

Well-chosen books are used as starting points to introduce new topics. Teachers plan work for pupils in Year 2 that builds on what they learned in Year 1. Teachers successfully help pupils to remember what they have been taught. For example, pupils spoke with confidence about what they learned and remembered about plants in science.

On occasion, specific tasks given to pupils are not as well thought out or as demanding as they usually are. As a result, teachers' expectations of pupils' learning are sometimes not high enough.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. They also ensure that planning takes good account of pupils' home and life experiences and any gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills.

Reading has a high profile in the school. Leaders introduced a new programme for teaching phonics at the beginning of this academic year. Children learn phonics daily right from the start of their time in school. Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained in the new scheme. Leaders keep a careful check on the teaching. Pupils' phonics skills are already showing considerable improvement.

Children and pupils use their phonics knowledge well to read unfamiliar words and to help with their writing. In Year 2, most pupils can read their own writing fluently and read and write confidently in a range of subjects. Pupils develop a love of reading and stories from the very start of school. They love choosing books and talking about their favourite stories. They were very involved in setting up and judging the best classroom reading area.

The presentation of pupils' work is not always accurate or precise. Too often, letters and numbers are not correctly formed. In phonics, the presentation of pupils' work is not clear enough. It is not helping teachers to keep track of what pupils can do.

Pupils not only know the school values but live and promote them. They instinctively help each other out and are mindful and respectful of others' needs. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as 'helping hands' and school council membership. A range of trips and visitors to school enrich the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding and pupils' well-being are absolute priorities for all staff, including governors. Leaders are unwavering in their work to secure the appropriate support for

children and families. All staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures and are vigilant. Leaders work well with other professionals to support vulnerable pupils and their families. A new online system ensures that information can be shared efficiently.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and staff and parents agree that they are. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe, for example through having good hygiene procedures and healthy lifestyles.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The way in which pupils record their phonics work is not yet consistently well presented. This sometimes makes it difficult to see what they actually know and can do. It is not always clear how pupils are building on skills and knowledge over time. Some recording of learning across subjects lacks precision and accuracy. Leaders should ensure that pupils improve the legibility of their writing when forming letters and numbers. Staff and governors should agree what the expectations are throughout the school.
- The curriculum intent is very clear. However, sometimes, the tasks that teachers plan do not always make enough demands on pupils and work can be too easy. This means that curriculum aims are not always served well enough and that pupils do not always achieve as well as they can. Leaders need to continue to fine-tune and embed the curriculum so that progression is even more precisely defined. They need to ensure that there are consistently high expectations for the achievement of all pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 14–15 June 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	118461
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10122292
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mrs Jody Catterall
Headteacher	Miss Julie Oakley
Website	www.stpaulsmaidstone.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	14–15 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has three classes in the Reception Year, three in Year 1 and three in Year 2.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other leaders and teachers.
- A meeting was held with three members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority.
- I did deep dives in reading, mathematics and science. For each of these subjects, I met with curriculum leaders, carried out lesson visits, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from the lessons visited.
- I spoke to pupils in and out of lessons, talked with them about their learning and heard some pupils read.
- To inspect safeguarding, I met with the designated safeguarding lead and one of the deputy designated safeguarding leads. I looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding documentation and talked to pupils and staff.
- I considered the 58 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 32 free-text comments.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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