

# Inspection of St Paul's Walden Primary School

Bendish Lane, Whitwell, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 8HX

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Inspection dates: 5–6 March 2020

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy being at this school. They enjoy the opportunities they get to take part in sporting activities. Staff arrange trips to exciting places such as Imperial War Museum Duxford.

Most pupils conduct themselves well. They move around the school sensibly. They are keen to welcome all visitors to the school. Most pupils work hard in lessons but a few need to take more pride in their work. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They know who to talk to if they are worried.

Over the past three years, pupils have not been achieving as well as they should by the end of each key stage. The teaching of reading has improved and this is helping pupils to learn in other subjects.

Staff are committed to improving the quality of education for pupils. However, teaching staff do not have the knowledge they need for all the subjects they teach. Due to this, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders know what needs to improve and are taking decisive action.

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

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to staffing in the school. There is now a stable staff team which works closely together to improve the quality of pupils' education. Leaders have introduced an ambitious curriculum. However, staff do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to teach effectively in all subjects. Leaders are providing staff with precise training to address the gaps in their subject knowledge. This is beginning to improve staff's confidence and improve the quality of education for pupils at the school.

The early years curriculum is in the early stages of development. Children's learning this year has been broad but not well sequenced. In Reception, children's writing skills are not well enough developed. They do not have enough opportunities to practise writing with adults or in their play. The use of the outside area is not well planned. Children do not gain as much from the activities on offer as they should.

Pupils enjoy reading. Teachers choose books to read to pupils that link to curriculum topics and pupils' interests. Pupils choose from a good selection of books at appropriate levels for their abilities. They can talk about some books that they read, but not always confidently.

Leaders changed the approach to phonics teaching at the start of the academic year. This has led to significant improvements. Most pupils are using their phonic knowledge to read books confidently. However, some older pupils have gaps in their reading skills. Leaders have ensured that these pupils are receiving precise support from skilled adults. This is helping them to catch up.

Pupils' work across the curriculum shows that teachers do not always plan for pupils to build on their learning over time. Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding in lessons. As a result, learning does not enable all pupils to remember important knowledge.

Pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities (SEND) do not achieve as well as they should. Teachers do not always adjust learning so that pupils with SEND can achieve as well as they could.

Pupils and staff say that behaviour in the school has improved and most pupils behave well. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Leaders ensure that families receive support so that their children are more punctual and improve their attendance.

Leaders are creating an inclusive culture where pupils are accepting of each other's differences. Their personal development is enhanced by visits, including the opportunity to meet people with disabilities and perform to them. The curriculum enables pupils to have a good knowledge of how to stay healthy by eating well, exercising and sleeping. Pupils learn about events in other countries. This led to the school council organising an event to raise money for those affected by fires in Australia.

Governors know the school well and are focused on the correct priorities. They provide challenge and support for leaders. They have been highly supportive of the headteacher and her team during a period of considerable change.

Staff appreciate how leaders are considerate and supportive of their workload.

Parents' opinions of the school are mixed. A small but significant number of parents feel that leaders do not listen to their views. There is further work to do in building positive relationships with parents.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on keeping pupils' safe. The right checks are completed on staff before they start to work at the school. Staff receive regular and appropriate training. This enables them to recognise the signs when a pupil is at risk of harm. Where there are any concerns about pupils' welfare, they are dealt with quickly and appropriately. Leaders accurately record concerns and actions taken. They seek support from external agencies when required so that pupils quickly get the help that they need. Teachers ensure that pupils know how to stay safe when they are online.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The early years curriculum is not as well planned and sequenced as it should be. Although there is a broad curriculum, children do not always build knowledge and skills as well as they should, particularly in writing and mathematics. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum plans set out precisely what children need to know and be able to do in readiness for key stage 1.
- Teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to deliver the school's chosen curriculum. As a result, the quality of learning and work in books is not completed to a high enough standard. Leaders will need to ensure that training provides staff with the knowledge and skills to deliver the curriculum effectively.
- Teachers do not check well enough how well pupils are learning. As a result, work in lessons does not always meet pupils' needs and this hinders their learning. Teachers need to check pupils' understanding in lessons so that they can plan new learning that builds on what pupils already know.
- Some parents feel that leaders do not communicate with them as well as they should. They say that they do not know if their children are making progress or behaving well. Leaders should improve communication between school and home so that all parents know how well their children are achieving in school.

### 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117144
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10133405
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	97
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Anne Reid
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nancy Adshead
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stpaulswalden.herts.sch.uk">www.stpaulswalden.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 March 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- Most classes are mixed-age groups.
- Since the last inspection, the leadership team and most staff have changed.
- There have also been several recent additions to the governing body.
- An independent pre-school operates on the school site. It is inspected separately.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We spoke to the headteacher, teaching staff, members of support staff, governors and the school's external adviser.
- We spoke to pupils in lessons, out of lessons and on the playground.

- We considered 45 responses to Ofsted’s online and free-text surveys, two letters from parents and nine responses to Ofsted’s staff survey. We spoke to some parents after an assembly.
- To inspect safeguarding, we scrutinised the school’s single central record and spoke to a wide range of staff, pupils and parents. We looked at a range of safeguarding records.
- We did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, writing, mathematics, and art. These deep dives included discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. We looked at the school’s curriculum plans, pupils’ work and visited lessons.

### **Inspection team**

Keith Pullen, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tessa Holledge

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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