

Inspection of a good school: St Paul's C of E (C) Primary School

Byatts Grove, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 2RH

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 May 2021

Outcome

St Paul's C of E (C) Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, the inspector has some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud to attend their school. In particular, they speak enthusiastically about the school grounds. Pupils say that they feel safe because the staff look after them. Older pupils talk about the school's Christian values of 'compassion', 'endurance' and 'friendship' with confidence.

Leaders and staff want the best for all pupils. They have worked together to improve aspects of pupils' learning. This has resulted in changes for the better across the school. However, leaders are aware that there is still more work to be done.

Behaviour is mostly positive in classrooms and around the school. However, older pupils do not always listen well in lessons. They do not always focus on their work. This slows down pupils' learning. This frustrates other pupils who want to get on with their work.

Pupils understand and can talk about different types of bullying. When bullying happens, staff deal with it straight away. Leaders take any bullying incidents seriously. Pupils value this.

Many parents speak positively about the school. They value the support they get from the staff. However, some parents are concerned about the high turnover of staff and the effect this has had on their children.

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

In subjects such as mathematics, curriculum plans are clearly mapped out. Teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. This helps teachers to plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before. In these subjects, pupils remember what they have been taught and they can talk about it confidently. Their knowledge and skills build well from lesson to lesson.

However, curriculum plans are too general in many of the foundation subjects. They lack detail and are disjointed. In these subjects, curriculum leaders do not have the subject knowledge and expertise required to lead their curriculum areas effectively. As a result, teachers are not clear about what they need to teach, and pupils struggle to remember what they have learned.

Pupils say that they enjoy reading. Older pupils can talk about their favourite books and authors. The order of phonics teaching is clearly planned across the early years, key stage 1 and, if required, beyond. All staff have been trained to deliver the phonics programme. However, not all staff teach phonics well. Consequently, some pupils fall behind with their reading and require extra help.

Teachers plan and deliver lessons that make learning interesting. They have good subject knowledge in many curriculum areas, such as mathematics. In these subjects, teachers explain new ideas clearly in ways that pupils understand. They use questioning well to check and deepen pupils' understanding.

Teachers support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They match work to the needs of pupils with SEND. If required, resources and practical equipment are made available to support learning. Teaching assistants intervene quickly if pupils need extra help with their work.

The Nursery and Reception classrooms are colourful, welcoming and well resourced. The early years outdoor area is impressive. Staff use the environment well to support learning. Staff work closely with families, even before their children start to attend school. This helps children to settle quickly. Children are cheerful, confident and enjoy speaking to visitors. They are keen to share their achievements with others. Leaders know that they need to improve children's outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics further by the end of the Reception class. This is now a greater priority because of when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions during the last year.

Pupils miss the extra clubs that leaders and staff organised in the past. However, they enjoy the 'Bee Active' clubs that take place every Thursday. Pupils agree that they would like to go on more trips in the future. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. Older pupils are beginning to understand the importance of mental health.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Pupils trust staff. They say, 'Our teachers are kind.' Staff know the pupils well. They provide extra help and support in many ways, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged. The school supports pupils who display challenging behaviour well. Every day is a fresh start.

Senior leaders are working hard to improve the school. Leaders are aware of what needs to be done. They are determined to improve the school further. Governors are supporting leaders to make these improvements. Staff agree that leaders are considerate of their well-being. They say that leaders have taken action to make sure that the workload is not over burdensome. Staff enjoy working at the school.

In discussion with senior leaders, we agreed that early reading and a sample of foundation subjects may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is at the top of the school's agenda. Pupils say that they feel safe because their teachers look after them and the school site is secure. Leaders check thoroughly staff's suitability to work with children before they start to work at the school. The safeguarding team organises regular, effective training for staff. As a result, staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Pupils get the help and support they need. Teachers help pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe in school and beyond the school gate.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some of the foundation subjects, including history and geography, curriculum plans lack detail and clarity. Teachers are not clear about what they need to teach and the order in which they should teach it. Pupils struggle to remember what they have learned. Their knowledge and skills do not build well over time in these subjects. Leaders need to set out clearly what pupils need to learn in these subjects, and the order in which they should learn it.
- Some curriculum leaders do not have the subject knowledge and expertise required to lead their curriculum areas effectively. They do not make sure that their curriculum area is designed and delivered to meet pupils' needs. Senior leaders need to ensure that curriculum leaders have the capability to plan, implement and monitor their curriculum areas effectively.
- Not all members of staff implement the phonics curriculum successfully, despite whole-school training. Pupils fall behind with their reading and require extra help. Leaders need to provide staff with the relevant support so they can deliver the phonics curriculum effectively.

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 or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 13 and 14 January 2015.

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 information from Parent View 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 [here](#).

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	124227
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10184076
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Phillip Smith
Headteacher	Nicola Finney
Website	www.stpaulsprimaryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 January 2015

Information about this school

- A Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's C of E Primary School as a Church of England school took place on 24 September 2015.
- The school has a breakfast club operating on the site. This provision is managed by an external provider.
- The school makes use of alternative provision, provided by Watermill Special Academy. Ofsted inspects this provision separately.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held ongoing meetings with the headteacher. He met remotely with two members of the governing body. The inspector also discussed the school with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector held meetings with the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead, the safeguarding officer, and the early years leader.
- As part of the inspection, the inspector focused mainly on early reading, mathematics and history. He met with groups of pupils, curriculum leaders and teachers to talk about the quality of education in these subjects.

- The inspector made visits to classrooms. All of these visits were with the relevant curriculum leader.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke to pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school. He looked at their work to see how well the curriculum is implemented.
- Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children prior to employment. The inspector checked that safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively across the school.
- The inspector talked to parents after school. He considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 17 free-text responses received during the inspection.
- The inspector considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation provided by the school. He looked at the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, published information about pupils' performance, behaviour records and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspector looked at information published on the school's website.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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