

Inspection of a good school: St Paul's Roman Catholic Primary School

Pemros Road, St Budeaux, Plymouth, Devon PL5 1NE

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 July 2022

Outcome

St Paul's Roman Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff are proud of the school. There is a shared understanding of, and belief in, the school's values, including, 'Let all that you do be done in love.' Pupils are kind and considerate. This starts with the children in the Reception Year. Pupils strive to help and learn from each other, to make the day enjoyable for all.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. There is a happy and harmonious feel to the day. Pupils interact well together. At the odd time when pupils fall out, particularly over football at breaktimes, staff intervene and take effective action to help settle disputes or prevent boisterous behaviour. Pupils appreciate this. They have confidence in staff. There are positive and trusting relationships between pupils and staff.

Pupils understand what bullying is. They say it is rare. If any bullying happens, pupils are confident that teachers will deal with it. Bullying is not tolerated. Staff have high expectations of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to think about their behaviour and the consequences of their actions. As a result, pupils behave well throughout the school day, including in lessons.

The curriculum is effective and enables pupils to learn well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

Leaders, including governors, have high expectations of pupils. They want pupils to be happy and achieve well. Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken the right steps to continue improving the school. This has not been easy. Aside from COVID-19, there are a high number of pupils with additional needs, including those with SEND. Leaders acquit themselves well. They do not make excuses and are not complacent. As a result, pupils receive the support they need to be successful and to keep up with their peers.

Senior leaders, including those at the trust, have worked successfully with middle leaders. They have established a strong core team to distribute roles and responsibilities, including subject leadership. This helps to build capacity and to share the workload. Middle leaders feel well supported. They have formed an effective and cohesive group to maintain a strong focus on the quality of education and to tackle identified weaknesses.

During and since COVID-19, leaders have continued to revise the curriculum. They have been effective in establishing a strong curriculum with clear expectations of what they want pupils to learn. The curriculum is ambitious and mostly well sequenced so that pupils know more and remember more. Those who need to catch up, particularly those with low starting points, do so well. However, there are a few remaining subjects, such as design and technology and computing, which are not as strong as the others. The curriculum intent or thinking for these is incomplete. Consequently, pupils do not gain the full range of knowledge as well as they could, in readiness for the next stage of their education.

Reading and mathematics are cornerstones of the curriculum. These are well planned and sequenced so that pupils acquire core knowledge. The latest revisions to the wider curriculum, for example in geography, are enabling pupils to rapidly increase what they know and remember. The early reading and phonics programme is well established. Staff understand the importance of getting pupils out of the starting blocks quickly, including in the Reception Year. The phonics programme is implemented rigorously with an unswerving focus. Pupils enjoy learning to read and hearing stories.

Pupils with SEND are identified quickly and most are supported well, including those with an education, health and care plan. Leaders ensure that there are individual education plans (IEPs) in place for pupils with SEND. However, these do not always match the identified letters and sounds that pupils need to learn with what is being taught or pupils' reading books. As a result, there is a slight disconnect between the intended plans and the targeted support to help some pupils catch up with their reading. This means learning to read is not as smooth as it can be and limits the enjoyment or progress of some pupils with SEND.

Leaders ensure pupils are happy and curious. This includes children in the early years foundation stage. Pupils are given opportunities to explore their own thoughts and feelings, including about issues that matter to them. As a result, pupils learn to become caring, tolerant and respectful. For example, they are keen to give their efforts to create food parcels for Ukraine or raise money for many different charities. Pupils like to take positions of responsibility, such as being ambassadors, school councillors or play leaders. This enables them to make valuable contributions to the day and in looking after each other.

Leaders support staff well. They fully consider staff workload and well-being. Senior leaders are approachable and keen to help staff in managing their workload, wherever possible.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well-trained and knowledgeable. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are vigilant. Leaders take timely action to protect children and keep them safe. However, there are some inconsistencies in recording and maintaining recruitment information, including updating the single central record (SCR). Administration and record keeping in this regard is not good enough, although all relevant checks are completed. While the administration processes are not strong, this does not place pupils at risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have implemented an ambitious and coherent curriculum, although there are a few subjects which still need further development. As a result, pupils do not gain the key knowledge they need in readiness for the next stage of their education. Leaders must ensure that every subject is taught with the same clear intent and quality.
- Leaders ensure pupils with SEND have an IEP in place. However, these do not always precisely match the identified letters and sounds that pupils need to learn with what is being taught or pupils' reading books. This limits the progress and enjoyment of some pupils. Leaders must make sure that IEPs consistently target phonemes with well-matched activities and books to help pupils catch up further in reading.
- The administration and record keeping for staff recruitment and vetting checks, including maintenance of the SCR, are not good enough. There are some inconsistencies in how records or information is held. Although this does not endanger pupils, it causes unnecessary discord in the school's safeguarding arrangements. Leaders must ensure that pre-employment checks and other related information is recorded and maintained in an orderly and effective manner.

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, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

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 Ofsted 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.

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	140676
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10228027
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	157
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ruth O'Donovan
Headteacher	Dawn Potterton
Website	www.stpaulsplymouth.com
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is located in St Budeaux, Plymouth.
- The school is part of Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust, which it joined in April 2014.
- The school was re-inspected under Section 48 in June 2022. The overall judgement from this inspection was outstanding.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The numbers of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are well above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography.
- For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and

looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at individual plans for pupils with SEND to see how these are being implemented.

- The inspector also spoke with some pupils about their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.
- The inspector looked at the SCR and checked the school's systems for monitoring and reporting safeguarding concerns. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead, who is also the head of school.
- The inspector also met with the special educational needs co-ordinator to help evaluate SEND provision and practice in the school.
- The inspector spoke with a range of staff and met with groups of pupils to find out what it is like to be a pupil, or to work, in this school.
- The inspector met with some governors and trustees, as well as the trust's director for education and the school's link trustee.
- The inspector reviewed key documentation, including the school's self-evaluation form, school action plans and headteacher reports.
- The inspector checked all survey responses, including those from pupils, staff and parents and carers. This included taking the 15 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, into account.

Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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