

Inspection of a good school: Pope Paul Catholic Primary School

Baker Street, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 2ES

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2022

Outcome

Pope Paul Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Pope Paul Catholic Primary School achieve well and are proud of their school.

They feel safe because they know adults are there to help if they have a worry. Pupils say that bullying is rare. If it happens, pupils know they can tell an adult and it will stop. The school's ethos of 'respect and care for each other' is demonstrated in the way pupils listen carefully in lessons and how they look after each other.

Clubs, for example sewing and choir, provide pupils with opportunities to celebrate their achievements. Pupils sing in assembly and visit other schools to watch performances. Pope Paul Catholic Primary School is known locally as 'the singing school' because of their strong performances.

Pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibilities. This includes becoming a house captain or reading buddy. This makes sure that pupils have a voice that is listened to. Pupils find lots of ways to work with their community. An example of this was their 'living streets' project. This improved parking near the school, to make walking to school safer.

The trips that pupils go on are valued as they help them to remember important learning.

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

Leaders have designed a well-thought-out, ambitious curriculum that carefully sets out the knowledge and skills that leaders want pupils to learn. Leaders have built into the curriculum a range of experiences which enhance pupils' engagement with learning and help pupils to remember more. This was demonstrated, for example, in the way pupils were able to recall and apply learning from their visit to a Hindu temple. However, in a small number of foundation subjects pupils are not given consistent opportunities to recall and use what they have learned. For some pupils this limits their ability to develop confidence and fluency with their growing knowledge.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge which supports them to teach each curriculum area well. In lessons teachers typically use assessment well to spot where pupils have misunderstandings. Where pupils' learning is most secure this is due to teachers' effective response to address gaps in what pupils know.

Reading has a high priority across the school. In Reception, children are taught to read from the moment they join the school. Leaders have put in place a systematic programme for teaching sounds and early reading. Staff have received the training they need to deliver the phonics programme. In phonics lessons, staff model accurately the sounds that pupils are learning. Pupils practise and revisit their learning before moving on to new sounds. Pupils read books that are closely matched to their knowledge and understanding. This ensures that pupils develop into confident, fluent readers.

Children in the early years are enthusiastic about their learning. Staff teach children songs and rhymes to help them learn important knowledge such as mathematics facts. Leaders have carefully considered how the early years environment can support children to learn and reflect. This makes sure that children are well prepared for Year 1.

Leaders know their pupils well. This supports them to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are quickly identified, enabling appropriate support to be carefully planned and put in place. The provision for pupils with SEND is regularly reviewed and adapted so that pupils can access the same curriculum as their peers, and subsequently achieve their best. Where more support is needed for more complex SEND needs, leaders are quick to seek external advice.

Leaders provide for pupils' wider development well. Pupils learn to care for the environment and for each other. Pupils understand difference and celebrate diversity. Pupils are aware of themselves as members of a local community and the wider world. Pupils have opportunities to vote to build their understanding of democracy with their 'purple discs'. For example, voting for which charity they would like to support. This starts at the beginning, when children in Reception vote for which book will be read to them at the end of the day. The curriculum, as well as these experiences, helps pupils to grow into respectful, active citizens.

Governors carry out their statutory duties appropriately. Governors have focused on the right priorities and have given leaders effective support to improve the quality of education at Pope Paul Catholic Primary School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand their responsibility to safeguard pupils. This includes having robust checks in place to ensure that all adults are safe to work with children.

Regular training helps adults to understand and identify the risks pupils face. This helps staff to be vigilant about looking out for signs of harm. Adults know how to report a

concern. Leaders take prompt action in response to any concerns raised, including involving other agencies where needed.

The curriculum content ensures that pupils learn how to stay safe both online and in their community. They also know what steps to take if they are worried about anything.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are not enough opportunities in a small number of foundation subjects for pupils to practise and use their knowledge and skills. This means that on some occasions pupils struggle to apply what they have previously learned. Teachers should ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to recall the important content they are learning and apply it through relevant activities, across the curriculum. This will support pupils to have confidence to use their growing body of knowledge.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 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 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.

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	117496
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10193985
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Carole Strange
Headteacher	Elizabeth Heymoz
Website	http://www.popepaul.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 – 22 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Pope Paul Catholic Primary School is a one-form-entry school.
- Leaders provide a breakfast and after-school club.
- As the school is designated as having a religious character, it is inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The last section 48 inspection of the school was in December 2019.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector met with four members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspection activities included observing pupils' behaviour at lunchtime, listening to pupils read to a familiar adult and joining a collective worship session.
- Arrangements for safeguarding were scrutinised by the inspector. This included looking at the single central record and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead to review other safeguarding documentation and evaluate safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspector reviewed the 97 responses that were submitted from this academic year by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and 97 free-text responses submitted during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 13 responses to the staff survey, and the 73 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sharon Waldron, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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