

Inspection of St Paul's Way Trust School

125 St Paul's Way, London E3 4FT

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected St. Paul's Way Trust as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school are kind, caring and respectful towards one another. They are happy, enjoy coming to school each day and want to make the most of their studies.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. Across the school, the broad curriculum is well designed and ambitious. The focus on ensuring that pupils are well prepared for their next steps in learning is clear. This work is particularly strong in the early years. No time is wasted in teaching children essential knowledge, including learning to read. This forms a key part of leaders' work to ensure children's readiness for Year 1.

A rigorous and ambitious sixth-form curriculum means that students are well placed to choose from a wide variety of aspirational destinations when they leave the school.

Pupils know that staff expect them to behave well. Pupils' excellent behaviour shows they rise to this challenge successfully. Staff apply rewards and sanctions consistently and fairly.

Pupils learn about what makes a good friendship and why bullying is wrong. Bullying is rare but pupils know that they can tell any member of staff if they have any worries. They can also report their concerns anonymously, for example in the worry boxes in the primary phase. Staff act quickly to resolve any problems that arise. Leaders and staff help pupils to feel safe.

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

Leaders have an ambitious vision of what they want pupils to know from the early years through to the sixth form. Preparing pupils for what comes next in their learning guides leaders' curriculum thinking. This is because leaders want all pupils to be successful in their studies and become well-informed citizens.

Subject leaders collaborate across the primary and secondary phases so that pupils build their knowledge step by step over time. Decisions about curriculum content show leaders' ambition. In Years 7 to 9, for example, pupils read a rich selection of authors from different historical periods, including three Shakespeare plays. What pupils learn about the techniques and context of each author provides strong foundations for further study at GCSE.

In the sixth form, the ambitiously planned and delivered curriculum means that students develop deep knowledge. Students engage in high-quality discussions with each other and with their teachers. They draw on their detailed subject knowledge to explain their ideas.

Leaders make sure that staff have the training they need to deliver their subjects effectively. For example, teachers of early reading receive regular training to increase their expertise.

Staff check what pupils know and remember in each subject before moving on. They aim to rectify gaps in pupils' understanding and make sure that pupils are ready to grasp new concepts at a later stage of learning. This is done rigorously in the early years and sixth form but is less consistent in Years 1 to 11. In some subjects, teachers do not check if pupils have understood the knowledge that is needed to progress through the curriculum.

Teaching pupils to read is a high priority. In Reception, the teaching of phonics starts quickly in September. Leaders assess what pupils know and ensure that phonics teaching builds well on prior learning. Pupils who fall behind in the phonics programme are identified promptly. These pupils receive one-to-one support which helps them to make up for lost ground. Pupils practise reading by taking books home that match the sounds that they know. They also enjoy taking books out of the library and the daily dedicated reading time. Parents and carers are also invited to school to read with their children. Leaders quickly identify weaker readers in the secondary phase and make sure that support is in place.

Leaders are equally ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision). Staff identify these pupils' needs skilfully. They support them well to access the full range of subjects. Leaders also make sure that staff have the information they need to adapt their plans for pupils with SEND. For example, teaching assistants work with pupils before lessons to develop their understanding of technical vocabulary.

Throughout the school, the environment is calm and purposeful. Pupils arrive at lessons on time and get straight to work. Teachers apply the school behaviour policy consistently, and, as a result, pupils know what to expect in every lesson. Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. They take pride in their work and they want to do well. Sixth-form students focus on their studies and are keen to give back to the school community, for example by reading with younger pupils and leading charitable initiatives.

Beyond the academic curriculum, leaders provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities. These are aimed at developing pupils' self-confidence and character and promoting their personal well-being. Pupils learn about life in modern Britain, with a strong focus on equality and diversity. They get involved in the leadership of the school and raise money for charitable events.

An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is on offer, from a full orchestra and music ensembles to sports, debating and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programmes. Leaders' oversight of which pupils attend is strong. They make sure that all pupils make the most of these opportunities.

From Year 7 onwards, pupils receive high-quality careers information delivered through a carefully planned programme. Strong links with renowned universities and industry form part of this work, with pupils able to take part in leadership coaching opportunities.

Leaders, including trustees, care about staff's well-being. Staff enjoy working here, and they feel well supported. Leaders consult staff about planned changes and ask for feedback, for example through staff surveys. Staff appreciate that leaders respond to their ideas.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff receive annual safeguarding training, as well as termly updates. This means that staff are aware of signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation, and they know how to report them. Leaders have a good understanding of their local context. They work closely with outside agencies to provide the support that vulnerable pupils need. Leaders also ensure that all statutory pre-employment vetting checks are carried out when recruiting new staff.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, physically and online. They learn about healthy friendships and relationships in an age-appropriate way.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In Years 1 to 11, some of the checks on pupils' understanding do not focus on what subject content pupils know and remember from their earlier learning. At times, things that pupils are finding difficult are not picked up. When this happens, it can affect how well pupils progress through the planned curriculum. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders and teachers identify and go over knowledge that pupils have not mastered.

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	143379
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10242483
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,815
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	230
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Heathcote
Headteacher	Phil Akerman
Website	www.spwt.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is an all-through school with pupils aged three to 18.
- St Paul's Way Trust School converted to become an academy school in September 2016. When its predecessor school, St Paul's Way Trust School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 23 hearing-impaired pupils in the secondary phase.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the heads of school and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with the chair of the local governing body, two other governors and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, history, art and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors visited a sample of lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers to discuss the curriculum. Inspectors also considered pupils' learning in other subjects, including geography, science, music, sociology, politics, economics, psychology, biology, physics and religious education.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of employment checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils in all key stages. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtimes was observed.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff, including about safeguarding and behaviour. Inspectors also looked at staff, parent and pupil responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

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