

Inspection of St Paul's CofE Primary School

St Nicholas Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 3LP

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit from a supportive and nurturing environment. The four core values of wisdom, hope, community and dignity are promoted and celebrated throughout the school. Positive relationships between adults and pupils are evident in all aspects of school life, for example through the way that pupils work together in class and during social times.

Behaviour around school is calm. There are clear expectations about how pupils will behave. Pupils understand these and rise to them. They know why they should follow the rules and are proud to do so. Pupils are rightly confident that they do not need to worry about bullying. They know this is not tolerated in their school and any incidents of unkindness will be dealt with swiftly by adults. There are many opportunities for pupils to represent the school. The older pupils take their buddy roles seriously and wear their buddy bibs with pride.

Pupils do not achieve as well as they could in some subjects because the key information pupils must learn has not been fully identified yet. There has been a sharp focus on developing the curriculum since the arrival of the new headteacher, but there is still work to be done.

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

Leaders know exactly what work still needs to be done to strengthen the quality of education. They have identified weaknesses in the curriculum and have taken action to address these. In most subjects there is a clear, sequenced plan that identifies the important knowledge pupils should know and remember. Where this is in place, teachers check that pupils have learned the key content. This means that pupils are achieving well in these subjects. Plans are in place to develop this consistent approach across the school. For example, a new scheme for writing is being trialled to enable pupils to build their skills as they progress through the school, but it is not yet embedded.

Leaders ensure that children have a strong start in school. The children in the early years benefit from a well-planned curriculum. Adults carefully select activities. These enable children to learn the intended skills they need for future learning. Routines and expectations are clearly set in early years. Children learn how to share resources and listen attentively.

Leaders have successfully promoted a love of reading. There is a coherent phonics scheme in place that begins in the early years. Teachers generally follow the scheme closely. The books that pupils read are matched to the sounds they have learned. Most pupils learn to read well. However, the support that pupils who need to keep up with their peers receive does not always align with the sessions in classes. This means that some pupils are not always using the most effective strategies when learning to read.

Where the curriculum has been successfully developed, staff focus on ensuring that the key concepts they want pupils to remember are revisited. They use questioning to check what pupils already know and fill any gaps through their teaching. This includes making appropriate adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) based on their individual learning plans, which identify key information about their needs.

Pupils learn in a calm and purposeful environment. High expectations for behaviour are apparent throughout the school and regularly reinforced. Pupils are polite and articulate. Mutual respect is developed from the early years upwards. This is an inclusive school. Leaders have carefully considered how the curriculum promotes diversity with a focus on ensuring that pupils can see themselves represented through books, trips and visitors. Girls are proud that the football team has been hugely successful in addressing stereotypes around who can play football. Pupils are clear that everyone should be treated fairly and that everyone is welcome at this school.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. Pupils have a variety of opportunities to develop citizenship. They take a keen role in organising fundraising activities. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to share their thoughts and opinions. The school's link with Uganda also enhances pupils' understanding of community beyond their doorstep.

Governors understand their roles. They ask challenging questions so leaders are held to account. The governing body and leadership team have worked together to develop the role of governors. The relatively new senior leadership team has prioritised staff training with a focus on curriculum development and has carefully considered the programme, with an initial focus on English and mathematics. Through the work they have done so far, leaders have ensured that everyone is committed to providing a high-quality education for all pupils. They know that there is still work to be done and plans are addressing this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team is tenacious in its approach to leading safeguarding. Members of the team ensure that it is a priority area in school. Staff have been well trained so they know what to look out for. There are clear systems in place for raising concerns. Leaders follow these up and take action where necessary. This includes making referrals to external agencies.

Pupils understand different ways to keep safe. For example, they can explain how to cross the road safely and what to do if something makes them uncomfortable while online. They learn about this through the curriculum as well as in assemblies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Additional support for pupils who are struggling to learn to read is not always high quality. Some pupils do not catch up as quickly as they need to. Leaders should continue their work to iron out inconsistencies and ensure that all staff are expert in teaching phonics.
- In some subjects, leaders have not yet identified the content precisely enough. This means that teaching does not always enable pupils to build component knowledge across all areas of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers understand what pupils must know and be able to do in each subject and use this information to plan future learning.

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	114543
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10256381
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	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Fr. Dominic Keech and Angie Fantis
Headteacher	Michelle Lord
Website	www.stpaulsbrighton.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Diocese of Chichester. The last inspection of the school's religious character was in January 2023.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The current headteacher commenced her role in January 2021.

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 headteacher and assistant headteacher. They also met with other school leaders, staff and pupils.

- The lead inspector met with six governors, including the chairs of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with a representative from Brighton and Hove local authority and the Diocese of Chichester.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subject areas.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- The inspection team considered the responses to the confidential staff survey, pupil survey and spoke to a range of staff and pupils about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 57 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional 45 free-text responses. An inspector talked with some parents on the second morning of the inspection.
- The inspection team met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan, self-evaluation and pupil premium funding plan.

Inspection team

Sara Staggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Rivers

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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