

Inspection of a good school: St Pauls Church of England Academy

Robert Road, Tipton, West Midlands DY4 9BH

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 June 2023

Outcome

St Pauls Church of England Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils spoken to describe the school as 'great fun'. They not only enjoy their subjects, especially art and design, but also the wide range of additional activities on offer, such as the school choir and popcorn reading.

Leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils to do as well as they can, which they do, especially in writing and mathematics. The school promotes science well through, for example, a trip to the Black Country Living Museum.

Pupils live up to the school's values of 'love, hope, faith and forgiveness'. They get on well together. Older pupils look after younger ones, especially those who take on extra responsibilities. They do this through acting as reading ambassadors, who listen to younger readers, and sports leaders, who organise play equipment at breaktimes. Pupils are keen to help others, including raising money through a bring-and-buy sale to support victims of the Turkey earthquake. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around school.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe and the risks of 'stranger danger' on social media. There is always an adult on hand to talk to if they are worried, and any rare incidents of bullying are dealt with well by leaders.

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

Leaders' work is focused on further improving the school. This is reflected in their curriculum work on enhancing the status of a wide range of subjects beyond English and mathematics. Leaders make sure that the curriculum is suitably ambitious and accessible for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, teachers identify and meet pupils' needs well. The curriculum is designed in a well-sequenced way to help pupils progress from their previous learning.

Leaders have rightly prioritised reading. Staff apply the new phonics scheme consistently well across early years and in Years 1 and 2. Adults model sounds well and are consistent in their use of technical vocabulary. Children start to learn sounds almost as soon as they join Reception. Pupils read books that are well matched to the letters and sounds they know. As a result, they are gaining the knowledge and skills they need to be confident readers, including those who are at the early stages of reading. Children are fully engaged with their learning during phonics sessions. There are many opportunities and resources for pupils to read for pleasure, including the book box at lunchtime. Children, parents and carers are encouraged to join the local library through school trips.

Pupils enjoy their learning, including through undertaking practical activities. For example, younger pupils have learned to identify the body parts of animals, using the correct scientific vocabulary, and older pupils have enhanced their skills in art to use more sophisticated techniques, using shadow and colour in self-portraits.

Leadership across subjects is developing well, with a mix of experienced and newer leaders. They have time set aside for checking how well each subject is taught and assessed. They recognise that, in some subjects, there is more to do to ensure that assessment is used more effectively to understand how pupils are getting on.

Lessons proceed with almost no low-level disruption. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around school. Young children and new starters to the school learn good behaviour routines very early on. Pupils understand the 'traffic light' system in place for the rare occasions when sanctions are required. Pupils are keen to ask questions and discuss their work with each other in lessons. Levels of attendance are improving overall and compare favourably with national averages.

Leaders promote fundamental British values across all year groups alongside the school's values. Some pupils have a secure understanding of democracy, the rule of law, respect and tolerance. Others, including some older pupils, are not so sure. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of relationships, backgrounds and faiths present in the local community and wider world.

Pupils have many opportunities for trips and activities, which broadens their horizons. These include a trip to Wolverhampton Art Gallery, and they are learning how to make Islamic clay art. They have worked with the Royal Air Force to make rockets. Pupils have discovered from female role models how they can be flight engineers and computer specialists.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on reducing staff workload. This is much appreciated by all those who responded to the staff survey. Governors have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve further. They are highly experienced and knowledgeable. The school is outward looking and benefits from support, advice and challenge from the local authority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are vigilant and report any concerns, however minor they may appear. As a result, staff identify pupils at risk quickly, and they receive the early help they may need. There are good relationships with the local authority so that any external support needed can be secured in a timely way. Leaders ensure staff appointments are made safely and that any allegations are followed up thoroughly.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe when using the computer and when out and about near roads. Governors make sure that they meet their statutory duties.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Methods of assessment are not as securely established in some subjects as in others. Consequently, teachers are not so well informed about what pupils have learned and need to learn next. Leaders should ensure that arrangements for assessment are fully embedded in all subjects.
- Teachers have not been explicit enough in enabling pupils to have a deep understanding of British values. Therefore, some pupils do not fully understand them. Leaders should ensure that pupils consistently have a deeper understanding and knowledge of British values.

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 March 2018.

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	140921
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10282686
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Craig Taylor
Principal	Anna McGuire
Website	www.st-pauls.sandwell.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new assistant principal has been appointed since the last inspection.
- The number on roll has fallen since the closure of the Nursery provision in 2022.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

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 held meetings with the principal, vice principal, and other leaders and members of staff.
- The inspector spoke to several groups of pupils.
- The inspector met two members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority by telephone.

- The inspector took account of responses to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including the free-text service, as well as responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector considered information on pupils' behaviour, attendance, personal development, safeguarding and child protection.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science, and art and design. He also discussed work in a number of other subjects, including in the early years foundation stage. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, 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 listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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