

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

City Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG31 4SZ

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders ensure that pupils' respect for others is at the heart of the school's ethos. Pupils develop this by focusing on the seven principles of 'Catholic Social Teaching'. These include all pupils learning about human dignity and care for vulnerable people. Pupils welcome others from all backgrounds, countries or religions with open arms.

Leaders have devised a very well-structured curriculum. This engages all pupils in their learning. As a result, behaviour in classrooms is very strong. Pupils are well mannered and conduct themselves sensibly around the school. They play very well together outside. Staff recognise pupils' good behaviour by using effective behaviour systems, including 'St Paul's People'. Bullying is exceptionally rare. Leaders deal with any issues openly and fairly.

Pupils develop their own leadership by being, for example, school councillors or eco-warriors. The school community is proud of the 'Mini-Vinnies'. This group of pupils helps to decide the content for liturgies, as well as raise money for a range of causes. For example, in one activity, pupils spelled out 'PEACE' with tenpence pieces before donating them to a Ukrainian charity.

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

Leaders are highly ambitious for what they want all pupils to achieve in their time at school. Leaders expect all pupils, regardless of any challenges, to fully engage and learn the curriculum. They have created a curriculum that is well sequenced to promote pupils' learning.

Leaders give reading prominence and call it the 'best skill for life'. Almost all pupils in early years and Year 1 learn phonics very well. Leaders ensure that most staff deliver the phonics scheme effectively. At times, some pupils struggle to learn their sounds, but their teachers identify and support them to catch up. Leaders need to ensure all staff are using the teaching methods expected from the scheme consistently. A clear reading curriculum

builds through to Year 6 for pupils who have learned all their phonic sounds. This enables most pupils to enjoy reading and understand what they read.

Teachers ensure pupils learn the curriculum effectively. Lessons are active and purposeful, while classrooms are calm. Pupils' work is mostly of a good standard and shows the learning they have achieved. Teachers ensure pupils explore what they are learning effectively. This is very evident in art and science, for example. In art, pupils look at a range of different artists' techniques in detail. They carefully practise elements of the artist's style to produce high-quality artwork. In early years, pupils explored both magnets and buoyancy with interest in science. Teachers across the school do not maximise how they develop pupils' vocabulary. Subject leaders need to decide what key words they want all pupils to learn and when. This will enable all pupils to increase their understanding of subject-specific vocabulary, which will deepen their learning further.

During most lessons, teachers check how well pupils are learning. Staff ensure pupils can access the learning, either through extra adult support or adaptations to tasks. Pupils achieve particularly well in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers monitor pupils' learning very effectively in these subjects. However, for some wider curriculum subjects, teachers do not consistently check how well pupils have learned and remembered the curriculum. This means they do not always adapt subsequent lessons or units of work to build on pupils' previous learning. Therefore, leaders and governors are not able to fully assure themselves of the impact of the whole curriculum.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those who require additional support to manage their behaviour, receive the help they need. Staff work in collaboration with parents, as well as external support if necessary. Leaders use this knowledge to create specific individual academic or behavioural support plans. These highlight what each pupil needs to learn next. Leaders check the success of these plans regularly.

Leaders, including governors, want all pupils to achieve their very best. The staff are very happy to work at the school. This unity shines through and creates a very strong and inclusive learning environment for every pupil. Many parents are effusive for what the school provides their children. One parent commented, 'St Paul's is a fantastic loving school that leaves me with a good feeling as a parent. I couldn't be happier with all they do for my child.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and all staff want to keep pupils safe. There is a strong safeguarding culture. Training is thorough and regular. Staff have the knowledge to identify when pupils may be at risk of harm. Staff know the procedures they must follow. Leaders ensure that recording of any concern or associated follow-up actions are thorough. Governors monitor safeguarding processes regularly and diligently.

Pupils feel safe at school and say they would go to adults if they needed help. Pupils

understand possible dangers when online. For example, they know not everything is what it may seem, such as fake profiles and news.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In foundation subjects, assessment processes are not fully in place, and staff are not systematically checking what pupils have learned. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders and governors are unable to assure themselves of the impact of the whole curriculum. Leaders should ensure that teachers check what pupils have learned and use this information to adapt the curriculum so that all pupils develop and embed detailed knowledge in all areas of the curriculum.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2012.

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	110006
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10268976
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	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anne Dennehy
Headteacher	Nuala Oster
Website	www.stpauls.w-berks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is designated as having a religious character. This school's Roman Catholic character was last inspected in March 2018.
- The school currently uses no 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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also met with a representative from the local authority, a representative from the diocese and other leaders within the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and art. 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.

- In addition, the inspector also looked at other curriculum areas, including mathematics and personal, social and health education.
- The inspector reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records, interviewing staff and through discussions with pupils.
- The inspector considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of governing body meetings and behaviour incident logs.

Inspection team

Chris Parker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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