

Inspection of a good school: St Paul's CofE First School

School Lane, Coven, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV9 5AD

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 February 2024

Outcome

St Paul's CofE First School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Claire Richards. This school is part of Staffordshire University Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dr James Capper and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mary Walker.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Paul's CofE First School provides pupils with a good quality of education. It also teaches pupils to be kind, caring and supportive to others. The school's CARE values of community, aspiration, respect and endurance show in the ambitions that staff set for pupils. Indeed, expectations for learning are high, and are reflected in the academic standards reached. The school's values also show in the way pupils willingly take responsibility and look for ways to be helpful.

During their time at St Paul's, pupils enjoy a broad and worthwhile curriculum that prepares them well for middle school. From the start in Nursery through to Year 4, pupils are supported to develop healthy attitudes to learning, and to see the link between effort and success.

Pupils' behaviour is usually good and they are not worried about bullying. If any behaviour slips below expectations then staff deal with it calmly and effectively. Similarly, if anyone is upset, then pupils and staff work well together to make things better. Consequently, pupils feel safe and happy at school. Pupils have a say in shaping school life and enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities. The school's rules are fair and safety procedures work as they should.

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

Parents and pupils hold positive views about this school. They praise its caring ethos, interesting curriculum and attention to pupils' wider development. Inspection evidence confirms that they are right to have confidence in the school. It provides an effective curriculum and a healthy environment for learning. Pupils' positive attitudes and a

thoughtful behaviour policy enable school life to run smoothly. When any concerns arise, the school acts promptly and does the right things.

In almost every subject, learning is supported by clear and consistent guidance. This informs day-to-day teaching, assessment and progress over the longer term. It also means that when staff leave and new staff join, planned learning continues almost seamlessly. In reading, for instance, expectations for teaching are crystal clear. The school follows an established programme that has plenty of books and resources. Regular training ensures staff understand expectations and stay up to date. In response, pupils make strong progress. By the end of Year 2, most can read fluently. If anyone takes longer to learn then extra phonics teaching continues daily until they have caught up. The school's expectation is that everyone will be a reader. Indeed, an eye-catching library is the first thing everyone sees when they enter the school.

This ambition for reading is set from the start in Nursery. Beginning with songs and rhymes, staff teach children to master sounds and spot patterns. The school gives every child a nursery rhyme book to share with their families. This expectation for reading and sharing stories in school and at home continues right through to Year 4. From working with authors to analysing poetry, pupils are supported to develop a love of literature. Currently, the school is working to improve the quality of pupils' writing, which is not as strong as it could be.

In addition to daily English and mathematics, pupils study a range of other subjects. The curriculum in early years has been designed to pave the way for this. For instance, early attention to positional language and activities such as planning a route for Little Red Riding Hood set the foundations for later geography work.

As well as everyday lessons, staff take pupils on trips to places of interest. Pupils also participate in local and regional events such as sports tournaments and music festivals with other schools. Within school, older pupils take on special responsibilities, for example as play leaders or house captains. A pupil-led school council gives them a voice in decision-making and teaches about democracy.

The school works closely with external experts and parents to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils are included in all aspects of school life. Furthermore, staff receive training that helps them meet pupils' particular needs and enables them to achieve well.

Many staff have recently joined the school and some existing staff have stepped up to new responsibilities. Whether new to the school or long serving, the consistency of curriculum guidance and school policies helps to keep staff workload manageable. Staff appreciate this. Understandably, teachers who have recently taken on new subject leadership posts are still getting to grips with these roles.

The school benefits from committed, informed and reflective leadership. The headteacher, other leaders, governors and trust oversight steer the school well. These leaders have a good understanding of the school's successes and the next steps for further improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Several subject leaders are new to their leadership posts. They are beginning to develop their new responsibilities and their oversight of different subjects is at an early stage. The school should continue to support and guide these new leaders so they develop into well-informed, evaluative subject leaders.
- The standard of pupils' writing, which declined during the pandemic, has not yet recovered as well as other subjects. This means that writing standards are not as strong as they could be. The school should continue to focus on improving the quality of pupils' writing.

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 predecessor school, St Paul's CofE (VC) First School to be good in September 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147422
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10294673
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mary Walker
Headteacher	Claire Richards
Website	www.stpaulsfirstcoven.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Paul's First School is a Church of England school. In 2019, the school joined the Staffordshire University Academies Trust. The most recent diocesan section 48 inspection of the predecessor school took place in May 2016. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the previous section 48 inspection.
- The school provides before- and after-school childcare on the school site.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector considered published performance data about the school. He also looked at a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour,

attendance, the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, governance, school improvement planning and documents published on the school's website.

- During the inspection, the inspector had formal meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, school staff, pupils, governors and leaders from Staffordshire University Academies Trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, science and geography. In these subjects, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and considered pupils' work. The inspection also considered the curriculum in other subjects to check how they were organised and taught.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector talked informally with pupils, staff and parents to gather general information about school life. He took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff, pupils' and parents' views.
- The inspector observed pupils in class, at lunchtime, on the playground, in assembly and at the start and end of the school day. He observed some pupils reading to an adult.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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