

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Paul's Infant School

Hillary Road, Maidstone, Kent ME14 2BS

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Inspection dates:

1 and 2 July 2025

## Outcome

St Paul's Infant School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

St Paul's is a highly inclusive school. It recognises, nurtures and celebrates each pupil's unique talents. Pupils are happy and safe and quickly develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils embody the school's values, such as kindness, togetherness and respect, in the way they behave and learn. Parents and carers agree. One parent's comment was reflective of many: 'I have always described this school as incredibly nurturing and completely supportive of its children.'

Pupils work hard to reach the high expectations set by their teachers in behaviour and learning. High levels of emotional support for the youngest children ensure that they settle quickly and make a good start to school. From this strong foundation, pupils build confidence in their learning. As a result, pupils achieve well overall.

Relationships at all levels are consistently strong. Pupils trust the adults who look after them. There is always an adult they can go to if they have a worry or concern. Pupils are proud to be part of the school. They enjoy coming to school, reflected in the improving rates of attendance. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities they have to learn and take responsibility.

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

The school has an ambitious curriculum aimed at helping all pupils to achieve as much as they can. The well-designed curriculum covers the full range of learning across different subjects. In most subjects, the school has precisely defined the order, knowledge and skills it wants pupils to learn. As a result, pupils are able to build upon what they already know and achieve more in these subjects. The school recognises that this is not yet the case in some other subjects in the wider curriculum. The school has a comprehensive plan in place to address this going forward.

Reading is at the heart of the school's approach to developing confident, successful learners. As a result, it has high priority. Pupils read every day from Reception class onwards. Phonics teaching is consistently of a high standard. Teachers and support staff are highly skilled. As a result, achievement in phonics is improving, and standards of reading are rising. Teachers take swift action if pupils are falling behind in their reading to make sure they keep up and catch up. In early years, children learn letter formation alongside the sounds of the letters they are learning. Children quickly learn to write words. A new approach to writing enables pupils to develop vocabulary and create more complex sentences. Children have many opportunities to develop their understanding of number in Reception. Pupils build on this in later years so that they are confident in their use and application of mathematics.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and set high expectations for learning and behaviour. They provide clear explanations and regularly check pupils' understanding. Teachers take swift action if pupils are falling behind. They adapt tasks and activities to make sure all pupils can access learning. Many intervention programmes are available for those pupils who are new to the school and need intensive help. Teachers correct misconceptions pupils have before they become a barrier for learning. Support for pupils who need extra help is effective. As a result, the school meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has effective procedures in place that are improving pupils' attendance. This, together with good behaviour, significantly contributes to pupils' learning. Low-level behaviour issues in lessons are rare.

Pupils are tolerant and accepting. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their characters and personalities. Pupils benefit significantly from the school's focus on resilience and perseverance. The youngest children undertake tasks with concentration and stamina, resulting in joyful achievement. The school provides high levels of emotional support. This targets what individual pupils need to help them engage productively in their learning. As a result, pupils develop confidence, are good 'team players' and experience success. This contributes strongly to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Roles of responsibility, such as older pupils helping younger ones, helps pupils build up a sense of responsibility and self-worth. Pupils are proud to be able to undertake these roles and do so conscientiously.

Staff trust leaders. Teachers feel heard and involved in decisions that affect their workload or well-being. They support each other and value chances for professional growth. The governing body pays close attention to staff well-being. It provides essential support and challenge to the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the essential knowledge that pupils need to know has not been identified as specifically as it could be. As a result, some pupils have gaps in the key knowledge needed to achieve highly. The school should ensure that it clearly defines the precise knowledge they want pupils to learn and when.

## Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good/outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in June 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118461
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10379797
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	268
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Hayley Birtchnell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Aldridge
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stpaulsmaidstone.co.uk">www.stpaulsmaidstone.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	14 and 15 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school has three classes in each of the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 year groups.
- St. Paul's Infant School is federated with North Borough Junior School as part of the North Borough Federation. The school have had the same governing body since 2023. An executive headteacher oversees both schools.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
- The school runs the before-school provision, and the after-school provision is provided by an external provider.
- The school doesn't currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with members of staff, the executive headteacher, the headteacher, assistant headteachers and special educational needs coordinator. The inspector met governors, including the chair of the local governing body. He also met with a representative of Kent local education authority.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. He also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's survey for school staff.

### **Inspection team**

Bill James, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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