

St Paulinus Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101454
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	307689
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter McGregor

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Gray
Headteacher	Mrs M Davey
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Iron Mill Lane Crayford Dartford DA1 4RW
Telephone number	01322 523236
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. The inspector looked particularly at pupils' personal development and well-being, how well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners, and how well pupils are cared for, guided and supported. The inspector met with staff and pupils. Parts of lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires were examined and school information including assessment records and self-evaluation were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

St Paulinus is an average sized primary school. Pupils are from relatively advantaged backgrounds, socially and economically. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, mainly Black African and Caribbean, is a little below average. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and those for whom English is an additional language are below average. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status, Sports and ICT marks, Basic Skills award and Excellence in Early Years accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Paulinus is a good school with outstanding features. Pupils' personal development and well-being and the quality of care, guidance and support are excellent.

Pupils achieve well, particularly in mathematics, and leave at the age of eleven with standards that are significantly higher than average. In Years 1 and 2, pupils consistently make good progress and reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. A downward trend in Year 6 results up to two years ago has been reversed and standards have improved as a result of effective teaching and focused support. All pupils achieved the expected level for eleven-year-olds (level 4) or higher in English, mathematics and science in national tests in 2007; the school's targets were exceeded.

Pupils are academically successful because they have extremely positive approaches to learning, teaching is good and attendance is very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Year 6 pupils, when talking about their work and what they like about school life, use phrases such as 'a spectacular place to be' and 'I am really, really happy...ecstatic about everything'. Pupils are confident, exceptionally well behaved and excellent ambassadors for their school. They are extremely successful in adopting a healthy life style. They refer to working in the vegetable garden, where Year 6 pupils work alongside their 'buddy' Reception class friends, as well as good lunches, regular swimming, and involvement in physical education lessons and sports clubs. When discussing bullying, Year 6 pupils explained that they take responsibility for sorting it out if they can, talking it through and supporting one another. They also know that staff are always available to help, and any problems are resolved quickly. Pupils are confident that their voice is heard. Elected school council members mentioned how they had brought about substantial improvements such as the purchase of new chairs for a class, and wet-play equipment to make playtimes more enjoyable. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their lives. As well as being very articulate speakers who write well and use numbers with confidence, pupils show a great sense of community responsibility by selecting charities for which they raise funds.

Teachers know their pupils very well and the quality of relationships between pupils and staff is excellent. Work is generally well matched to pupils' needs. The specialist teaching of mathematics to small groups is helping to improve already high standards. Occasionally the pace of work is not fast enough. Some work is not marked with sufficiently constructive criticism for pupils to know what to do to improve further. Both teachers and pupils use the interactive whiteboards well to enliven lessons. The curriculum is good overall. French is taught to pupils in Years 3 to 6 and all pupils have a high quality personal, health, social and citizenship weekly session. In addition to the usual range of subjects, themed weeks and topic days make work much more interesting and enjoyable. Pupils describe as 'brilliant' their residential experiences and visits such as to the London Symphony Orchestra. Many visitors, for example, the local Member of Parliament, add an extra dimension to the curriculum. Planning for most subjects does not allow for sufficient use of computers in lessons. The school has identified the need to make more effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) in a range of subjects to enhance pupils' understanding of the value of computer skills in learning. The quality and popularity of the clubs and activities are excellent. As well as sport and music clubs, many pupils appreciate the environmental work in the extensive school grounds.

Staff care greatly about their pupils and work very hard to ensure that they are safe and well supported in all that they do. During breaks, when pupils are very lively as they let off steam, staff are watchful but allow them to enjoy themselves. A strong emphasis on praise and independence results in the extremely positive attitudes found throughout the school. Staff make clear to pupils what behaviour is acceptable and pupils respond very well to this consistent approach. In addition to the extremely good pastoral care, academic support is of a high order. The systems used are straightforward and highly effective. Regular teacher assessments and annual tests, results of which are shared with parents and pupils, enable the school to monitor individual progress. Pupils are given specific targets and the progress they make towards them is checked with great care. Where underachievement is identified, additional support, alongside focused work from the class teacher, helps the pupils concerned to progress more rapidly.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's direction for the school is exceptionally clear. Christian values are at the heart of what is provided, promoting equality of opportunity for all, achievement and enjoyment. Parents are very pleased with the education provided for their children, making comments such as 'his balanced view of the world is due to their kind, caring and sharing ethos'. Delegation of tasks is systematic and successful. A very strong team spirit has been generated. Governors are involved in the formulation of policies and review what is taking place, aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders evaluate accurately the quality of teaching and learning and other areas of school life. They are aware that further work is needed to eliminate shortcomings in teaching so that pupils achieve as well as they can. Good resources are used well, with the exception of some ICT facilities, and learning flourishes in the very good accommodation. The limited number of support staff restricts the extent of support the school would like to provide. Safeguarding procedures are rigorously followed to ensure pupil safety and well-being. The school has responded effectively to the last inspection report, provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Induction into the Reception class is thorough and very helpful to children and their parents. Children enter with standards above those usually seen, settle quickly and appreciate the excellent learning environment where they work and play, both indoors and out. The Foundation Stage staff team, with the support of parent helpers, very successfully plan and implement experiences which enable children to make good progress in their learning. By the time children transfer to Year 1, many are exceeding the Early Learning Goals. A parent of a child in Reception remarked 'the school is more like a family...the whole team of staff are the most caring and dedicated I've ever had the pleasure of meeting'. The effective teaching maintains a good balance of imaginative play, for example in the hospital role-play area, and carefully structured tasks such as phonics work, linking letters to sounds. At times, not all individual children are sufficiently involved when being taught. Great emphasis is placed on children's personal, social and emotional development, and their literacy and mathematical development. Leadership and management are good. The staff adopt a professional and reflective approach to self-evaluation. This results in further improvements in learning experiences, such as more effective use of sand and water trays.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan for wider use of computers as an aid to learning in all subjects.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paulinus Church of England Primary School, Dartford, DA1 4RW

Thank you for your enthusiastic welcome and help when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you and speaking to lots of you.

Many of you and your parents told me how much you enjoy school and what a brilliant place it is. I agree with you. It is really good with some things that are excellent. The school's Christian way of working is very important in its success.

Children do well in Reception and enjoy learning with the excellent equipment inside the classroom and in the outdoor area. Your teachers plan things very carefully so you always have lots of interesting things to do. Those of you in Years 1 to 6 do particularly well in mathematics, but are also good at English and other subjects. You do so well because the staff are always there to help you. Your attendance is very good, you work really hard and want to learn. You look after each other extremely well making sure that no one feels upset or left out, and your behaviour is excellent. You eat sensible foods and take part in lots of exercise. Your school council is important. The headteacher and governors listen to what its members have to say and try their best to help improve what is provided for you. You raise large sums of money for charities you want to help. In this way, not only do you help needy groups but also learn about planning fundraising activities and how to handle money.

The staff know you very well and teaching is good. You like teachers to use interactive whiteboards which you find helpful in learning. I have asked the headteacher to plan more opportunities for you to use computers during lessons so that your computer skills become even better. You really enjoy visits the school plans for you, particularly when you can stay away, and the interesting visitors to the school. Staff show great care for you, helping you to enjoy your time at school. They check extremely carefully to make sure you are doing as well as you can and provide help if you are not. The headteacher is leading the school very well, supported by all her staff and governors.

Best wishes,

Peter McGregor Lead Inspector