

St Paul's CofE Primary School, Stalybridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106233
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	309063
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Gill Jones HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	274
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Garrie Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Hand
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Huddersfield Road Stalybridge Cheshire SK15 2PT
Telephone number	161 3382060
Fax number	161 3039465

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly larger than average sized primary school situated in South Stalybridge. Most of the pupils who attend the school live locally. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is slightly below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small percentage are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils are at the very early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. A very small proportion of these have a statement of special educational need.

The school has gained a number of awards, which include the ICT Mark and the International School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Paul's Church of England Primary is a good school. The school has improved significantly since the last inspection. Children start in Reception with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with those expected nationally for four and five year olds. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 are now consistently above those expected nationally for 11 year olds, so they make good progress overall. The headteacher has set an ethos which is based on care and respect. Parents appreciate the warm, welcoming atmosphere and say their children are valued as individuals. Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and are very proud of their own and the school's achievements.

The school provides an exciting curriculum which engages pupils' interest and makes them keen to learn, so that they make good progress. There is a strong focus on the basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) and these are used creatively in other subjects. Excellent enrichment opportunities include an annual exchange visit to France. Pupils in Year 6 benefit from making friends with French children, learning to speak French and experiencing the culture. Pupils email their friends in France and Brazil and are gaining an excellent understanding of the world outside Stalybridge. The school has embraced the government's 'Every Child Matters' agenda and as a result, pupils have a good awareness of how to keep healthy and safe. They enjoy their lessons and say they are happy at school. The pupils are proud of work done by their school council and eco council.

Teaching is of good quality, overall. During the inspection, some outstanding teaching was observed, where pupils became totally immersed in their learning. Teachers have high expectations and lessons are lively and interesting. Attractive displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school demonstrate how staff value highly children's achievement. The quality of teaching is more variable in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school has identified this and is tackling the issue effectively. The good care, guidance and support offered to children are appreciated by parents. Pupils trust the adults in school to listen to their concerns and say when there is a problem, they are helped to resolve it quickly. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met. The school tracks the progress of individual pupils effectively and provides appropriate support for those who are not making the expected progress.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well and are effective in raising standards and achievement across the school. Together with the governing body, they have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Teachers' performance management is implemented effectively to ensure that all staff share the leadership's high expectations for children's achievement. The quality of school development planning is relatively weak and this impacts on the effectiveness of middle leaders. Although the senior leadership knows exactly how to improve the school, actions and lines of accountability are not made explicit in the plan. The school has made effective links with other providers, such as universities and the British Council, to prepare pupils to live in a global society. The rate of improvement since the last inspection and the leadership's focus on raising achievement means that the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the EYFS - Reception with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with those expected for four and five year olds. Their skills, knowledge and understanding are affected to some extent by their varied pre-school experiences, as the school does not have its own Nursery. The range of children's readiness for school is, as a consequence, very wide. Induction into Reception is good. Home visits are made by the EYFS leader. The knowledge gained from these visits has led to planning a relevant curriculum, which excites children to want to learn. After just a few weeks in school, most children are confident to use all the resources available to them, including the high quality outdoor area. Behaviour is satisfactory. A few children are not yet ready to play sensibly and find it difficult to share toys and equipment. The leadership of the EYFS and the relationships in Reception are good. The teaching assistants are sensitive to the children's needs and are effective in supporting their learning. However, teaching is inconsistent in quality. There is not enough good teaching to ensure that children develop their skills and understanding at a good rate. Plans are not adhered to by all staff and opportunities to help children to learn through their play are missed. This slows children's development. The EYFS leader has identified the strengths and weaknesses in Reception accurately and has plans of good quality to make the necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of school development planning by including sharply focused measurable targets, linked to pupils' progress and the school's cycle of self-evaluation.
- Ensure that all teaching in the EYFS is consistently good or better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with skills and abilities that are generally consistent with those expected for their age, though there is a very wide spread of ability. By the time pupils start Year 1, most are ready to start the Key Stage 1 curriculum. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 have risen over the last three years to above those expected nationally for seven year olds. This represents good progress. In 2008, the school's assessments show that standards have fallen, but they remain above the national average. The school has identified the reasons for the slight decline and support is in place for the few pupils who have not made the expected progress.

The standards reached by 11 year olds at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007 were above those expected nationally. They have improved since the last inspection. Pupils reach higher standards in English and science than they do in mathematics, particularly at the higher level (Level 5). The standards reached by 11 year olds in 2008 are as yet unvalidated, but the school's data shows that most pupils reached their targets. Not all pupils who were expected to reach the higher level (Level 5) in mathematics reached their target. The school has an action plan in place to tackle this issue. The work in pupils' exercise books shows they are making good progress. Standards in ICT are above those found nationally. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is as good as their peers. The progress made by pupils at the early stages of learning English is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. They enjoy school, have a strong sense of right and wrong and have positive attitudes to learning. Parents say their children are keen to go to school and this is shown in their good attendance. Behaviour is good. Pupils are aware of how to keep safe in and around school. For example, in a citizenship lesson, while discussing the 'Children's Safety Party' manifesto, pupils mentioned many ways to stay safe in the locality. Pupils say they feel confident that the adults in school will help them to resolve any problems quickly. They know how to keep healthy and appreciate the healthy snacks offered at break times, though not all pupils who bring a packed lunch choose to eat healthily at lunchtime. Pupils enjoy the annual residential visit to an outdoor pursuit centre and they say they are challenged physically and mentally. They contribute well to the local community through supporting charities and visiting local places of interest. Pupils talk knowledgeably about different cultures and are proud of the International Award their school has recently received. They appreciate the opportunity to make friends with children from France and Brazil and enjoy talking via email. The school council and eco council make a good contribution towards developing sustainability by collecting waste paper and improving the school grounds. However, they are not yet fully involved in the decision making, relying on staff to take the lead. Pupils take responsibility seriously and many of the older pupils enjoy being prefects and play leaders. Their good basic skills and wider experience of the world outside Stalybridge means that pupils are well prepared for their secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. Some teaching is outstanding. Typically, teaching is lively and engages the pupils' interest well. The teachers communicate the tasks clearly and pupils know exactly what they have to do. They have high expectations and these are consistent throughout the school. Relationships are positive, teachers use praise well and teaching assistants are sensitive to pupils' needs. Good use is made of ICT to stimulate pupils' imagination and make learning more meaningful. For example, in an outstanding history lesson, music was used very effectively to set the scene while the teacher skilfully helped pupils re-enact the battle between the Persians and Athenians. The interactive whiteboard was used creatively to explain the geography and events which caused the battle. Most teachers manage the pace of the lesson well and plan and provide an appropriate range of activities. Where teaching was no better than satisfactory, teachers took too long explaining the lesson and not all pupils were made to think hard enough. Sometimes, the same pupils answer most of the questions. In these circumstances, other pupils are not attentive and as a consequence, the progress they make is slower.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, overall. The enrichment of the curriculum is outstanding. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a modern foreign language at Key Stage 2. An appropriate emphasis is given to the basic skills, which include ICT. However, in mathematics,

the curriculum is not always matched closely enough to pupils' ability, so their progress is slowed. Planning for links between subjects is a developing strength. Pupils are provided with opportunities to practise their writing in subjects such as history and science, as well as emailing their pen-pals in France and Brazil. The school has made good use of external partnerships, for example, in running the excellent science project 'Gases Galore'. The curriculum is well resourced, particularly in ICT. The strong focus on personal, social and health education and citizenship means pupils learn how to make a positive contribution to society. The school provides an outstanding range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, including residential visits to an outdoor pursuit centre and a French exchange to Armentieres, which is twinned with Stalybridge.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care, guidance and support. It meets all current statutory requirements to safeguard pupils' health and safety and well-being. Parents say the school provides a caring environment. Staff enable pupils to enjoy their lessons and achieve well. Relationships between adults and pupils are good. There are effective reward systems that encourage good behaviour and respect for others, which pupils view as fair. The school tracks pupils' progress carefully. Pupils in need of additional help are identified quickly and appropriate support is given. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed well. Outside agencies are used effectively to support pupils' and families needs. Pupils who are gifted and talented are identified and their needs are being increasingly well met. All pupils are set targets for achievement. These vary in effectiveness as pupils do not always know how to reach their targets. Marking is regular and motivates the pupils. However, it does not always tell pupils exactly how to improve their work. The quality of day-to-day assessment in lessons is variable. The school has examples of excellent practice from which staff can learn.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good, overall. The headteacher has set a strong moral purpose, which permeates the work of the school. Her vision to prepare pupils for life in a global society is shared by all staff. The senior leadership team, which consists of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, know the school well. They are challenged and supported by an effective governing body and together they have brought about the good improvements since the last inspection. The school sets challenging targets for pupils, which are generally met. The systematic tracking of pupils' progress by senior leaders has led to the good improvements in pupils' achievement. This data is analysed carefully and the information used in performance-related targets for staff. However, although this information is used well on an individual basis, it is not reflected in the whole-school development plan. This lacks clarity and does not set out measurable outcomes which can be used to hold staff to account.

Subject leadership is developing well. The recent introduction of interviews with pupils to discuss their progress and monitoring of books means subject leaders are improving their knowledge of pupils' standards, progress and achievement in their subject area. However, subject leaders are not yet using all the information available to them to identify strengths and weaknesses. For example, subject leaders do not visit lessons across the school. The partnership between governors and subject leaders is a positive step towards ensuring subject leaders become more accountable for standards in their subject.

The leadership has developed effective partnerships which support pupils' achievement. Initiatives such as the International School Award have made a positive impact and mean the school is working well towards promoting community cohesion.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 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?	2

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	2
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Paul's C of E Primary School, Stalybridge, SK15 2PT

You may remember that Mr Hilton, Mr Martin and I visited your school recently to carry out an inspection. Thank you for talking to us about your school. We listened carefully to what you said and this letter is to explain what we found.

We judged your school to be a good school. You told us that lessons are interesting and that you enjoy coming to school. We saw that you play together sensibly and concentrate well in your lessons. You know how to keep healthy and we were pleased to see the healthy snacks at playtime. You told us that you enjoy the after school activities and are keen to take part. It was evident that you like to do jobs around the school. The prefects are very sensible and we are glad those of you in Year 6 who are not prefects know the 'right path' to become one. You are very proud of the work done by the school council and eco council, particularly the improvements to the playground. You know how to look after the environment and you take good care of your school, it looked very clean and tidy and we were impressed by the attractive displays of your work.

You have worked hard as a school to gain the International Award and the ICT mark. Your headteacher and teachers are very keen that you understand life outside Stalybridge. It is exciting that you go on an exchange visit in Year 6 to Armentieres. Not many 11 year olds have that opportunity!

Your headteacher knows the school well and all the staff are keen that you continue to achieve high standards in your work. In order that your school becomes even better, your headteacher is going to improve the plans for the school, so that everyone is clear about what needs to be done and the youngest children are going to be helped to learn more quickly. You can help to make the school better by continuing to work hard and being polite and friendly.

We enjoyed our visit to your school and I wish you all the very best for the future.