

St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121474
Local Authority	York
Inspection number	314001
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Dodd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs A Cluderay
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Mistry
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	St Paul's Terrace York North Yorkshire YO24 4BJ
Telephone number	01904 625240
Fax number	01904 674878

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils at this smaller than average sized school are from White British family backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school holds a range of national awards, including the Activemark, Artsmark Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark for the third time and Healthy Schools accreditations.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; pupils' personal development and well-being; the quality of the curriculum; academic guidance for pupils; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the schools self-evaluation, plans for further improvement, nationally published assessment data and the school's own records of pupils' progress over time. Observations of lessons and reviews of the work in pupils' books were undertaken together with the headteacher. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and the chair of governors. Questionnaires returned by parents were looked at. 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 this report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school has an accurate view of its own effectiveness and provides good value for money. It also has a number of outstanding features. Pupils thrive in the very happy, warm and caring setting, so that they achieve well, reach above average standards by Year 6 and make outstanding progress in their personal development. Excellent partnerships, for example, with parents, the church, other educational institutions and businesses help pupils to feel a strong sense of belonging to their school and local community and make them eager to contribute positively to it. Consequently, the school enjoys a very good reputation within the locality and is often oversubscribed. Parents are confident that their children receive a high standard of education and many say that this reflects the strong commitment and dedication of staff to their children's achievements and welfare.

Good teaching and learning ensures that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. Teachers' enthusiasm, their good organisation, very positive relationships between teachers and pupils, along with purposeful activities that make learning lively, fun and interesting, are strong features of lessons. Effective questioning keeps pupils on their toes. Teachers regularly assess pupils to find out what they already know and can do. In English and mathematics teachers use this information particularly skilfully to make sure that the work provided closely matches pupils' varying learning needs. The school also uses this information well in order to highlight where pupils' progress could be speeded up. In writing, for example, as a result of swift and decisive action to adapt the curriculum, pupils now spend more time improving their writing skills as part of their work in other subjects. Also, they are becoming increasingly aware about how they might improve, because teachers regularly discuss their challenging writing targets with them. As a result, standards in writing are rising and progress is speeding up, as seen, for example, in the significantly above average standards reached in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007.

Although standards in mathematics are above average, they have not improved at the same rate as standards in writing. The school knows that its next step is to tackle improving standards in mathematics with the same rigour as it has done in writing. Key to this is that pupils do not always have enough opportunities to practise their numeracy skills across other subjects of the curriculum and their understanding of what they have to do to reach their learning targets is less clear than in writing.

Making sure that pupils enjoy learning, are safe and healthy and make a positive contribution to their community have a very high priority in the life of the school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning because the curriculum includes a wonderful range of exciting activities, both in lessons and beyond the normal school day, particularly in sport and music. Pupils' growing confidence and maturity is seen in the wide range of responsibilities that pupils of all ages undertake eagerly. They behave extremely well and are especially respectful towards adults and one another. Pupils' outstanding personal development, along with their good academic progress, is why they are so well placed to succeed at secondary school and to become responsible young adults of the future.

A key factor in the school's success is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. In pursuit of excellence, she is driven to ensure that every child is nurtured and achieves well in a very caring and supportive environment. In this school, 'good is simply not good enough' and, because of this, she continually strives to search out opportunities for the school and the pupils

to achieve even more. Making sure that everyone shares her vision with equal determination and are suitably skilled to deliver such a high quality of education is never off the agenda. Improvement priorities are well chosen and actions are carefully planned in order to boost pupils' achievement where it is needed most, for example in writing. Following recent training, and under the careful guidance and support of the headteacher, staff who have recently taken on new management responsibilities are now well placed to make a greater contribution to influencing the way forward. The good improvements since the previous inspection, and the rigour with which weaknesses in pupils' achievement in writing are currently being addressed, demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

When children join the Reception class, their skills are broadly typical for their age. The very warm and caring relationships between adults and children, along with the bright and lively learning environment, both indoors and outside, ensure that children quickly develop a real thirst for learning and settle quickly into school routines. Children make outstanding progress and, by the time they start Year 1, almost all achieve, or are working beyond, the goals set nationally in all the areas of learning.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is particularly marked. This is because adults make the most of every opportunity to help children to learn to get along well together, talk about their learning, grow in confidence and behave very well. They have a very good understanding of how they can contribute to their school community. Teachers and support staff work together closely in order to find out how well children are getting on. They record their daily achievements meticulously, so that they can make sure that all the learning activities on offer build sufficiently well on what children can already do. The Foundation Stage leader uses this information particularly effectively to identify where progress might be speeded up even further and to fine-tune the curriculum in order to do so.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills across the subjects of the curriculum, so that standards rise even further.
- Extend the good opportunities that pupils have to understand their next learning steps in writing into other subjects, especially mathematics.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
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	2
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	1
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	1

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?	2

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	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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**

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed being part your St Paul's 'family' and you helped me to see why you enjoy coming to school so much. You were very keen to talk to me and answered all my questions very thoughtfully. I particularly enjoyed seeing you playing musical instruments and performing in the school choir. You get lots of chances to take part in so many exciting activities both in school and in your local community. All the adults care a great deal about you and give you lots of encouragement to do well and to grow in confidence. I was very impressed with how well you all look after one another: you are so kind and caring and your behaviour is really good all the time. No wonder you feel so safe in your school. Your parents told me how pleased they are with the school and how proud they are of what you achieve.

Your school is a good school. You do better in your learning than children in many schools and so you are really well prepared for going to secondary school at the end of Year 6. Your school works very hard indeed to make sure that everyone helps with making things even better for you. This is one of the reasons why you are now doing much better in your writing now than you did before. There is still more that can be done to make your school even better. Here are some things I have asked your school to do.

- Make sure that you get even more chances to practise what you learn in your mathematics lessons when you are doing work in other subjects. This is so that you do as well in mathematics as you are now doing in writing.
- Make sure that you are just as clear about what you have to learn next in mathematics as you are in writing.

You can help by trying to remember what your learning targets are and by checking what you still have to do to reach them. and of course you should continue to try your very best in everything that you do.