

# St Paul's Church of England VC Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123783
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	314715
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Lee

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	294
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Susan Marable
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christine Arnold
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 July 2005
<b>School address</b>	Paul Street Shepton Mallet BA4 5LA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01749 343250
<b>Fax number</b>	01749 347970

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The school is larger than the average primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage although the number from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased steadily in recent years. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The range of difficulties and disabilities is broad, including autism, speech and communication problems and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils achieve well in both their academic and their personal development. It is a rapidly improving school that is reaping the benefits of the hard work of all staff in their response to the headteacher's drive and determination to improve achievement and raise standards. This has transformed the school, turning it round from a school where many pupils underachieved to one where they are making good progress and thriving on the good quality of education that they experience. Pupils' levels of attainment when they start school fluctuate annually but are generally below average. In the past, progress over time has been inconsistent and standards have usually been below average by the end of Year 6. The measures put in place to improve achievement have had a good impact. Standards in each year group are generally in line with the levels expected. In some cases they are higher, and most noticeably so in reading and science. This is a real success, because the proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average in each year group. National test results of Year 6 pupils improved dramatically in 2008. This, together with inspection evidence, indicates that there has been exceptional progress in reading, writing and science in the last year by many pupils in Years 3 to 6. The school recognises that there is still work to do, particularly in improving progress in mathematics, which has been lagging behind other areas.

A key reason for the improvement in achievement is good teaching and learning. Teachers make good use of the rigorous systems that are now in place for checking pupils' progress. Few pupils fall behind in their work but any that do are identified quickly and given the extra help they need. Actual analysis of the results of tests and assessments is mainly carried out by senior staff. Class teachers are not sufficiently involved in this analysis, especially at the end of the school year when there is insufficient discussion of progress to ensure smooth transition to the next class. Pupils have a love of learning and work hard. They know the targets set for them to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills although these targets are sometimes too vague. This means that pupils do not have enough opportunities to measure their own success. Marking also varies in quality and so pupils are not always getting sufficient guidance on how they can improve their work.

The curriculum is broad and provides a good balance of learning opportunities in different subjects. There is strong emphasis on pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. This results in their good personal development and well-being, which is shown particularly in their enjoyment of school and their good behaviour. Some parents have expressed concerns about standards of behaviour but inspection evidence revealed consistently good behaviour and pupils confirmed that standards of behaviour have improved recently. The school's outstanding pastoral care has many strengths and reflects the school's impressive commitment to meeting the social and emotional needs of all pupils and their families.

Leadership and management are good. The school knows itself well and its self-evaluation judgements are cautious but accurate. The headteacher, senior management team and governors work very well together in promoting improvement in all aspects of the school's work. The impact of recent initiatives shows that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve rates of progress in mathematics.
- Provide more consistent guidance for pupils through marking of work and the use of specific short-term targets for their learning.

- Increase teachers' involvement in analysis of test results and the use of this information to identify key areas for development in pupils' learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' good achievement is seen in the impressive rates of progress that are now occurring consistently in all year groups. Progress in reading and science is particularly impressive. The recent whole school focus on writing is having good impact on progress, with improved standards of work in writing across the curriculum. Whilst progress in mathematics has lagged behind other areas, this is quickly catching up due to improved provision in aspects of the subject, such as methods of calculation and mental mathematics, which were previously weaknesses in pupils' learning.

The improved picture of pupils' progress is having significant effect on the standards being attained. Throughout the school far more pupils are reaching the standards expected of their age than in the past. This is evident in reading, writing and science, and to a lesser extent in mathematics. The percentage of pupils exceeding expected standards is also rising. This is due to better provision for the more able pupils that is challenging them to strive for high standards. The fact that nearly half the pupils who took the national tests attained the higher level in science is one example of the effectiveness of such provision.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Strong relationships amongst the whole school community help pupils become happy and confident learners. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently good and contribute to the positive atmosphere. Pupils enjoy school and all that they do there. Their good attendance is one important indicator of that enjoyment.

The pupils themselves say how much they are helped by opportunities such as those provided by the support centre. Pupils learn and play well together. They know how to stay safe and what to do if they feel vulnerable. Those with responsibilities such as school councillors and anti-bullying coordinators make an invaluable contribution to the school community. The school as a whole is very involved in local community activities and this impacts well on personal development.

Pupils are caring and reflective. They have a good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles and enjoy taking part in the wide range of physical activities that are available to them. Provision for pupils' future economic well-being is satisfactory overall, although there are not enough links in learning to real-life contexts.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good teaching ensures that pupils are learning effectively and making good progress. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly and provide learning activities in English, mathematics and science that are well matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Objectives of lessons are always explained at the outset and then revisited with pupils during the lesson. Pupils are often given opportunities to talk about their learning with a partner or in small groups. This helps

them to think about how successfully they are meeting the lesson's objectives, to learn from one another and to appreciate one another's work. Pupils also have targets in the form of skills to develop in reading, writing and mathematics but these are not referred to often enough in lessons. This means that pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to think about how work is helping them to achieve their individual targets.

Teaching assistants are skilled at supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as those with English as an additional language, so that these pupils make good gains in learning. Occasionally, teachers do not always give enough consideration to the role of support staff, when teachers are themselves working with the whole class.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The good provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) fully meets the needs of all learners. Planning of other subjects shows that there is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils in some of their work. This limits the progress that these pupils could make in these subjects. In contrast, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are well catered for. The curriculum is enriched well by days and weeks on specific themes and by educational visits. Pupils' learning is made interesting by strong emphasis on practical activities, both in classrooms and outside in the extensive grounds. The good variety of after-school clubs supports pupils' learning across the curriculum and enhances their personal development.

The curriculum has been developed well by adopting a cross-curricular approach. Such linking of subjects is especially effective and well developed in planning opportunities for writing and ICT in other areas.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

All staff are highly committed to raising pupils' self-esteem and in promoting their health and safety. The levels of personal support given to all pupils and their families are exceptional. The school has many high quality intervention strategies in place including nurture and social groups. Personnel such as the learning mentor, the family advisory liaison worker and the parent support adviser play key roles in the provision. Pupils' well-being is further enhanced by facilities such as the support centre and breakfast club. Where it has been necessary to exclude a pupil from school for a short period, the systems to help them fit back into school life are very successful. Statutory arrangements for the safeguarding of children and child protection are fully in place. There are inconsistencies in the academic guidance and support given to pupils. Marking is variable and does not always tell pupils how they can improve their work. Targets to promote pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy vary in format, and are sometimes too vague and lack timescales. This means that pupils are not sufficiently motivated to try to achieve targets as quickly as possible.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership and management at all levels have a positive impact on school effectiveness. Checking of pupils' progress, by analysis of data from regular tests and assessments, is rigorous

and is used well to identify groups of pupils requiring extra help. There is a strong focus on monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching, both of which are improving. Until recently, much of the analysis of data has been carried out by the headteacher and although senior staff are being trained to take on this responsibility, class teachers are not sufficiently involved. The introduction of regular progress meetings, when class teachers and the headteacher review pupils' achievement, is helping teachers to make more use of test results and other assessments to guide their planning. There is still work to do, especially in developing end-of-year consultation between a class teacher and the colleague taking over the class in the next year. Highly effective literacy, numeracy and science leaders provide detailed analyses of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work that are used successfully to guide staff on ways to raise standards. The role of other subject leaders has been developed well. Their completion of annual subject self-evaluations provides a detailed picture of any aspects of learning or the curriculum that need improvement. This is used for thorough planning of actions needed to improve pupils' achievement and standards.

Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are supportive and have a strong commitment to the ethos of the school. They monitor thoroughly the progress in key areas of the school's work.

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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

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

Dear Children

Inspection of St Paul's C of E Junior School, Shepton Mallet, BA4 5LA

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for talking with us so willingly. We thoroughly enjoyed joining you in lessons and seeing you at work. We think your school gives you a good education. This is what we particularly appreciated:

- You are making good progress because you work hard.
- Your behaviour is good and you told us that it is continually getting better. This makes your school a friendly, pleasant place where you all care for one another.
- You understand well the importance of healthy eating and exercise, and about what are safe things to do at school and home.
- Teaching is good and teachers check your progress thoroughly to ensure you do not fall behind in any of your work.
- Teachers plan interesting work for you in all subjects.
- Those of you who find learning difficult are helped well by the adults who work with you.
- All the adults do a good job in looking after you and making sure that you are safe and get help whenever you need it.
- The school is led very well by the headteacher, and all the adults, including the governors, are working hard to improve it.
- We have three recommendations to help your school to get even better:
  - Improve the progress you make in mathematics.
  - Make some changes to target-setting to help you make better progress, and ensure that marking of your work always gives you information about how you can improve your work.
  - Involve all teachers in looking closely at information on how well you are making progress so that you can do even better.

We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Paul's C of E Junior School an even better school.

Yours sincerely

Colin Lee Lead inspector