

St Paul's CofE (C) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124245
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314858
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorna Jones
Headteacher	Irene Kirby
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2003
School address	School Lane Coven Wolverhampton WV9 5AD
Telephone number	01902 790253
Fax number	01902 791994

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a medium sized village school with significantly fewer pupils than at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is less than normally found, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is broadly in line with that expected for their age.

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 where pupils flourish in all aspects of their development. An important reason for the school's success lies in the effective leadership by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. The headteacher has high aspirations for the school and a clear view of how to raise standards of teaching and learning. These factors have led to good improvements in the school's performance over recent years and current standards that are above average, overall, by the time pupils leave. This represents good progress by all groups of pupils from their starting points. The highlight is in science, where the very successful focus on experimental work has given pupils a thirst for learning and turns out some gifted young scientists by Year 4. For some years, standards in mathematics have lagged behind those in other subjects. Action taken by the school to improve the teaching has started to raise standards in this subject, but some pupils still struggle when asked to work out sums quickly in their head. This affects all aspects of mathematics and the school recognises the need to provide more quick-fire mental mathematics work to hone their skills.

Pupils think the school is 'brilliant' and 'lovely'. They appreciate the way that teachers make learning fun and always have time to help them when they are stuck. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to illustrate their lessons, and pupils love moving letters and numbers around the screen. Staff have clear rules for behaviour, and it shows in the way pupils treat adults at school and each other. They have high expectations of pupils who strive hard to meet them.

Pupils say how much they enjoy the interesting activities provided in the curriculum, although some feel, with justification, that there could be more after school clubs. The curriculum provides lots of guidance on healthy living and pupils develop an excellent understanding of how to eat the right foods and take good care of themselves. The school has recently started to link subjects such as literacy, history and geography together more, and this works really well. Some of the work on the Tudors is an outstanding example of how this approach makes the best of pupils' talents. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures, and Year 4 pupils clearly gained a lot from their research into the lives of children in Africa and other countries.

Parents value highly the way the school cares for their children and makes them feel safe. This starts in the Nursery, where staff are very good at getting children to settle quickly and enjoy their work and play. As one parent put it, 'My children are lucky to get this start at school. Such a happy and safe environment!' The school has robust health and safety and child protection systems that are monitored closely by the staff and governing body. Teachers track pupils' progress carefully and are good at telling pupils how well they are doing. They are not so good at making it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve still further and this is rightly one of the school's main priorities.

Pupils feel well prepared for the future. They enjoy the many opportunities to take responsibility for their community and they do this readily. For example, members of the school council and ECO committee take their duties very seriously and have done much to improve the school. Pupils support local and national charities enthusiastically and are justifiably proud of their part in the Best Kept Village competition. The school's strong links with the Church help to explain why pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is so good. They think deeply about issues such as poverty and friendship and are not afraid to appreciate other people's strengths. For example, one pupil, when asked to say something good about another

child, wrote with feeling, 'He lets me borrow his best gel pen, even when there's only a bit of ink left.'

These many strengths explain why the school has improved significantly since the last inspection. They also mean that it is well placed to do even better.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for children in the Foundation Stage. The close home-school links and well planned induction arrangements ensure that children make a smooth transition to school and settle into routines quickly. The staff work well as a team to make detailed assessments that show clearly how well children are progressing and what they need to do next. The curriculum is planned well to ensure children have a good balance of work to improve their academic skills and opportunities develop their independence. Adults provide good care, support and guidance so that children feel safe and valued. The teaching and learning are consistently good. Lessons are fun and challenging so that children learn quickly. As a result, they make good progress so that, by the end of the Reception Year, their knowledge and skills exceed those expected of children their age in all areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities to work out calculations in their head in order to improve standards in mathematics.
- Ensure that pupils are clear about how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. They make a good start in the Nursery class and by the end of Reception they achieve well in all areas. This good progress continues into Years 1 and 2. The 2007 teachers' assessments for Year 2 pupils showed that standards overall were above average. The current group of pupils are doing just as well, with their reading skills being a real strength. Nearly all pupils are confident readers and have a love of books. Pupils continue to thrive in Years 3 and 4, where their attainment by the end of Year 4 is above that normally found in reading, writing and science. In these subjects, a significant minority of pupils are already working at levels expected of pupils in Year 6. In mathematics, while pupils have made satisfactory progress and their attainment is broadly average, some struggle when asked to work out sums quickly in their head and this affects all aspects of their mathematics work.

Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because they benefit from good support, both in lessons and in small groups taught by skilled teaching assistants. They make particularly good progress in their reading because of the effective teaching of how to work out unfamiliar words.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are polite, friendly and caring and really enjoy coming to school. Nearly all attend regularly because, as one remarked with feeling, 'Our school is a caring place so we love coming!' Relationships are very good and pupils are quick to support and help each other. They have a

strongly developed sense of right and wrong and behave well in lessons, assembly and around the school. They love being involved in their community and relish opportunities to join the school council and ECO committee. Pupils feel strongly that they are listened to, and their suggestions for improvements are followed up. They have an outstanding awareness of how to stay safe and always walk sensibly around the school and over the bridge across the brook. They knew exactly what to do when the fire drill was carried out and what they should do in the safe evacuation of the school building. Pupils have an exceptional understanding of how to live healthy lives and thoroughly enjoy the many sporting activities available, such as the sponsored skip and gymnastics. They are starting to become aware of how well they are achieving, but not all are clear about what they need to do to improve. Their mature social skills and their confidence in language, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teaching explains why pupils achieve well. Teachers are very skilled at encouraging pupils to attempt difficult work without fear of failure and this is the reason why many are such confident learners. Teachers begin lessons well, with clear explanations and searching questions that take very good account of the different abilities in the class. They make lessons enjoyable and provide many opportunities for pupils to discover things for themselves. This was illustrated very well in a science lesson when pupils had great fun using sieves and magnets to sort materials. The teaching of literacy is good and gives pupils a love of books and enthusiasm for writing. In numeracy, while teachers are very good at providing interesting challenges that inspire pupils, they do not always allow sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their mental skills.

Assessment is good. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and use the information well to plan further work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is stimulating, creative and enjoyable for pupils. Links between subjects help to sustain pupils' interest and provide good opportunities for them to practise literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The curriculum has recently been enhanced by the inclusion of Spanish, which has become a firm favourite with pupils. The provision for the arts is strong, and pupils enjoy the many opportunities to take part in activities involving dance, art and design and music. The curriculum makes good provision for pupils with learning difficulties. The extra support they receive enables them to take a full part in school life.

An extensive personal, social and health programme gives pupils good opportunities to develop team skills, self-confidence and enhance their self-esteem. The school makes good use of visits and visitors to make learning experiences real. However, there are too few extra-curricular clubs to extend pupils' skills and broaden their interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a very welcoming and friendly place with pupils' welfare at the heart of the provision. Procedures for health and safety, child protection and risk assessment are robust and reviewed regularly. Pupils are well advised and guided in their personal development and adults are quick to help those who are troubled. The recently introduced systems to track pupils' progress generally work well, although the school recognises the need to make the next steps in their learning clearer.

The school promotes healthy living very well, and all pupils have access to fresh water, a choice of fruit every day and nutritious lunches with plenty of choice. Recently, the school has quite rightly received the Active School Mark and Healthy Schools Award.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads well with a good focus on raising standards and developing pupils' personal qualities. She has helped develop an effective team of staff who share her vision and work well together to make this a successful school. Leaders at other levels play an important part in the analysis of the school's performance, comparisons with other schools and the setting of targets for improvement. This effective self-evaluation has helped raise standards a lot over recent years, particularly in English. The school recognises that leadership in mathematics has taken something of a back seat in the past because the main priority was to raise standards in reading and writing. This helps to explain some inconsistencies in the teaching that account for slightly lower standards than in other subjects. The school has developed useful partnerships with other schools that enable the leaders to share expertise and training.

The enthusiastic governing body provides good support and challenge to the school. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and work closely with the headteacher and staff to make improvements.

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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?	2
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's C of E School, Coven, WV9 5AD

Thank you for your important contributions to this inspection. You made the inspectors feel so welcome and we loved watching you work so hard, play so energetically and sing so beautifully. Those of you who were kind enough to speak to us told us a lot about your school. You think yours is a good school and we agree!

What we liked about your school.

- You work hard and make good progress, especially in reading and science.
- You have an outstanding knowledge of how to keep safe and live healthy lives.
- Your teachers do a good job; they make lessons fun and always help you when you find things difficult.
- You enjoy the activities planned for you and the wide range of visits and visitors that make learning interesting.
- You behave really well, both in class and around the school, and are very kind to each other.
- The staff and governors run the school well and know how to make improvements.
- All the adults take good care of you and are there to help you if you are upset.

What we would like the school to do now.

- Help you to do even better in numeracy by giving you more practise at doing mental mathematics sums in your head; you can help by practising at home!
- Make sure that you know what you need to do to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Terry Elston Lead inspector