

St Paul's CofE (Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125171
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315176
Inspection date	31 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Gray

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	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Tanton
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Whittle
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	St Paul's Road West Dorking RH4 2HS
Telephone number	01306 883547
Fax number	01306 740544

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' progress and personal development, teaching and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from records of pupils' attainment, samples of pupils' past work, observations in lessons and round the school, meetings with staff, governors and pupils and an analysis of 137 responses to the parents' questionnaire. 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.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most schools of its type and is over-subscribed. Most pupils come from socially advantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is below average and few are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below what is normally found.

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 with outstanding features. Pupils achieve well because of their excellent attitudes to learning and the good teaching. The headteacher gives excellent leadership and inspires her staff with her clear vision for how to make the school even better. There is good capacity to do this because of the school's very effective self-evaluation.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They have a highly developed sense of responsibility. One pupil said that what he likes best about the school is 'Year 6 and the older pupils look after the younger ones.' 'The younger ones like this too' said another. This is evident in the responsible way the Playground Leaders distribute the toys that the school council bought for the lunch break, and the patience with which the younger children await their turn. Of this, one parent wrote, 'The Playground Leader scheme is good for the children's development in giving them a sense of responsibility and taking part actively in their school community.' School councillors say the school really listens to their ideas. These are collated and sent by the Year 6 chair in a letter to the headteacher. Other pupils agree that the council 'makes a difference. They listen to us and write our suggestions in their books.' Behaviour is outstanding in classrooms and the playground. A parent commented, 'One only has to see how quickly a busy playground clears into straight lines of children at the ring of a bell.'

Pupils have a very well developed understanding of the importance of healthy and safe lifestyles, yet they temper their views by showing the need for balance and realism. As one boy said, 'Nothing is really unhealthy, but you mustn't have too much of the wrong food.' They appreciate the importance of free choice while stressing the need to respect others' views: 'People are what they are. The world would be boring if everyone were the same.' Pupils' attendance is good, but a few parents do not always cooperate with the school about not taking days off for treats or holidays during the term.

Children begin in Reception with skills that are above those usually found among four-year-olds. Pupils reach high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave Year 6. This represents good achievement overall. Pupils' progress in English is outstanding because it is consistent across the school. In an English lesson in both Year 5 classes, pupils were learning about parts of speech through a narrative of a visit to London. The learning was particularly effective because the teachers had set different 'success criteria' for pupils of differing ability. These are well understood by pupils and they use them to assess their own learning. In mathematics, pupils' progress is less consistent than it is in English, because teachers do not always use their knowledge of pupils' prior learning when they plan the next steps. The same success criteria are often set for the whole class, regardless of ability. This means that, on some occasions, higher attaining pupils do not receive enough challenge, whereas, at other times, lower attaining pupils are given work that is too difficult. This is an issue which the school has already identified and is a current focus for action.

The school provides a good curriculum which is well enriched with a wide range of extra activities. One pupil commented on the very good range of sports he takes part in, and a parent wrote to say, 'The sporting opportunities are excellent.' A recent visit to the Globe Theatre led to interesting and enjoyable drama activities when back in school. The information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum has just undergone a thorough rewriting, following a rigorous evaluation involving all staff. New schemes of work and planning are now enabling teachers to plan effectively for the use of computers in a range of subjects. There is at present

no thorough system of assessment, so that leaders have no means of knowing if standards in ICT are as good as those in English. This is something the school is already working on.

The school gives its pupils good care, guidance and support. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Pupils are confident that any problems they may have will be swiftly and well dealt with. They feel safe in school and say that bullying is not a problem. The school has introduced a thorough system of tracking pupils' progress every term. This is effective in indicating where extra support is needed and staff respond quickly. The system for tracking progress in mathematics is still undergoing refinement.

Leadership and management are good and result in a school of which pupils are proud and which is very popular with parents. A large number of parents wrote very positive comments on their response to the questionnaire, typical of which are: 'St Paul's is a well disciplined, highly organised, secure, academic, family orientated school,' and, 'My daughter loves the school and skips off every morning.' A small number of parents did not agree with every question on the form. However, the only issue which was recurrent is the large size of the classes in Year 4. The headteacher receives excellent support from her senior managers and coordinators have worked effectively in recent months to develop their roles. Governors are considerably involved in planning for the school's development and in monitoring its work through links with subject coordinators. Links with classes have also been made and governors visit lessons when they can. They are developing their ability to select a focus for these visits themselves.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Virtually all reach the goals expected of them by the time they enter Year 1 and most surpass this standard. The curriculum is designed to appeal to children's interests. On the day of the inspection, activities were based around the book, 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. Small groups explored the copse while others were occupied on tasks inside and outside the classroom. Some programmed floor robots to hunt for the bear in a maze while others made a collage of a bear's face on a paper plate. These activities promoted children's ability to share and work together well and produced much excitement and enjoyment. Many parents wrote to say how quickly their children have settled into school. 'The process,' wrote one, 'has been well thought out and implemented, making starting school an easy and positive process.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable teachers to make greater use of evaluations of how well pupils have learnt in planning for what they need to learn next.
- Build on the recent changes in the ICT curriculum, to give teachers a clear view of the levels of pupils' attainment.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	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	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	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

7 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's CofE (Aided) Primary School, Dorking, RH4 2HS

I enjoyed my visit to your school because so many of you made me feel welcome, even remembering my name, for which I thank you. You are lucky to go to a school with such lovely grounds and exciting places to explore, as the Reception children were when they went on their 'bear hunt'.

You go to a good school which has some excellent features. One of these is your behaviour. You show great consideration towards each other and to all the adults. You work hard in lessons and take an important part in the running of the school, such as the Playground Leaders and School Councillors. Another excellent feature is the range of sports you can take part in. Many of you and your parents commented on this. Your headteacher is an excellent leader and knows how to make your school even better. All the adults are working together well to bring this about.

You reach high standards in English, mathematics and science and make particularly good progress in English. In mathematics, you sometimes do not receive the right amount of challenge. The work might be too easy for some of you or too hard for others. I have asked the school to find ways of getting it just right. You have a good ICT suite, though a problem last half-term meant that you lost much of your work. I have asked the adults to keep a check on how well you are doing in ICT, so that you might do as well in computer work as you do in reading and writing.

Some of you might want to read my whole report, which is only about two pages long. You might recognise quotations from what you and your parents told me.

I hope you continue to enjoy your education at St Paul's.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Gray

Inspector