

St Paul's Community Primary and Nursery School, Spalding

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120423
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	316510
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Weston HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	247
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Beeken
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2006
School address	Queen's Road Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 2JQ
Telephone number	01775 723326
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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This average sized school is located in the rural Lincolnshire market town of Spalding. When St Paul's was inspected in January 2006, it was judged to require special measures. More pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual times. Around a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and in the early stages of learning English, which is above that found nationally. A higher than average number of pupils claim free school meals. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is similar to the national average although there are fewer with statements of educational need. Children start school with attainment that is generally well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. All areas of weakness identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed. St Paul's is an improving school with some emerging strengths. Its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory. Children in the Foundation Stage start school with standards that are well below the expected level. They get off to a secure start, with most making satisfactory progress. Improvements in teaching, underpinned by better planning and assessment, mean that pupils now make satisfactory progress in lessons and over time. Nonetheless, the legacy of poor provision and previously inadequate progress means that, in many cases, the standards of pupils' work are well below the levels expected. Standards of attainment for all age groups were significantly lower than national average figures in 2007. School leaders also recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that pupils have the essential skills that will equip them more fully for the next stage in their education and for later life.

Since the last inspection, the inadequate teaching has been eradicated with the proportion of good teaching increasing significantly. This is now beginning to address the legacy of underachievement. The school provides a satisfactorily broad curriculum with an appropriate range of additional activities. A sound start has been made in developing the curriculum, although further improvement is required, particularly in ensuring some subjects are taught in sufficient depth and, where appropriate, linked together. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school is a calm and orderly community that provides good pastoral care for its pupils. It is in a strong position to cope with day-to-day challenges and the on-going influx of new pupils from different parts of Europe. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. The friendly, supportive atmosphere helps pupils grow in confidence, enjoy learning and behave well.

Leadership and management, including governance, are now satisfactory. The school's improvement has been the result of a clear sense of direction, of good senior leadership, rigorous self-evaluation, the hard work of staff and their willingness to embrace changes. There is now a full complement of staff who are united in their commitment to move the school forward. Subject leadership is strong in some areas but those leaders whose subject has not been a priority have not had sufficient opportunity to develop their role. Much care has been taken to ensure that all the recent improvements are sustainable. This has been achieved through a combination of good appointments, effective professional development, the implementation of clear policies and robust systems, and judicious financial planning. There is sound capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children coming into the Foundation Stage classes have a successful start to their school careers. Once in school, most children make sound progress in their learning and in their social and emotional skills, although this is improving. Teachers now give pupils a wide range of experiences, which are carefully planned to make sure they learn everything they need in an interesting and stimulating way. Recent developments in reading are enabling children to gain a secure grounding in early reading skills. Staff are working to improve the use of the outdoor area so that children can use it throughout the day and in every season to extend their experiences. By the time children start in Year 1, although some achieve the goals set for

children of this age in most areas of learning, the majority are working below the expected levels. All children enjoy coming to school and are particularly good at caring for each other. They understand the need to share and co-operate with others. This is helped by the strong relationships children have with the adults working with them. The Foundation Stage manager is becoming increasingly effective. Staff are improving their assessment procedures in order to provide a more accurate picture of what children can do when they start Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve rates of progress for all pupils, but particularly the higher attaining, by challenging and expecting more of them in lessons.
- Develop the curriculum to ensure all subjects are taught in sufficient depth and make appropriate links between subjects so that the curriculum is more thought provoking, enjoyable and interesting for pupils.
- Further develop the role of subject leaders other than those of core subjects.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards remain well below average across the school, however, progress has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The Year 2 teacher assessments in 2007 demonstrated that standards were very low in reading, writing and mathematics. However, most pupils made satisfactory progress from their very low starting points. The picture in Key Stage 2 was very similar. The outcomes of national tests for Year 6 pupils were well below average. For example, only about half this group achieved the national standards in English, mathematics and science. This placed the school in the bottom 5% of all schools in the country. Challenging targets were not achieved by some considerable margin and the school was below the national targets in all subjects. Girls achieved better in reading and writing, while boys achieved better in mathematics. However, results in national tests only partially tell the school's story up until the summer of 2007. Since the last inspection in 2006, significant improvements in the quality of teaching have accelerated the pupils' progress. Achievement is now satisfactory. Through good intervention programmes, reading, writing and mathematical skills are now rising significantly. The school's robust and accurate assessment information indicates that standards are improving and that progress towards its challenging targets is satisfactory. This is borne out in lessons. Observations by the school's staff and the inspection team confirm that pupils are making satisfactory and sometimes good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are at the early stages of learning English make satisfactory progress because of the well-targeted support provided for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory although there are a number of good features. Pupils enjoy their time at school. This is shown in their good behaviour and attitudes towards one another in class and around the school. When asked about school, one pupil enthusiastically stated, 'school is great fun!' Any unacceptable behaviour is challenged

and positive steps are taken to address it. There are good relationships between pupils and staff. Newly arrived pupils from a range of European countries have been welcomed and fully included in to the school community. Pupils are aware of the need to lead a healthy life style through regular exercise and eating healthy food. At lunchtime, one of the younger pupil's said, 'I need to eat my apple so that I can grow big and strong.' There is a good variety of activities available to pupils in school to encourage physical exercise such as sporting opportunities, a gardening club and cycle training. Pupils feel safe in school. Although a small minority of parents perceive bullying as an issue, effective systems and staff are in place, including mentors, to deal sensitively with any concerns. Attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. The school is working positively with outside agencies to reduce the level of unauthorised absence of a small minority of families. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They contribute effectively to the local community through supporting charities and events such as the 'Raindrops' project carnival, 'Shoe Box Appeal' and the 'British Heart Foundation'. However, weaknesses in basic literacy and numeracy skills means pupils are not being prepared well enough for their next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The amount of good teaching has improved since the last inspection and there is greater consistency between classes as good practice is being shared and developed. As a result, pupils are making faster, and more even, progress because they have a better understanding of what they are learning and are producing better quality work. Pupils particularly enjoy using the interactive whiteboards and laptop computers in their work. Teachers' improved use of information about what pupils know and can do is helping them plan more closely for pupils' needs, particularly for those with learning difficulties, but work to extend the more able pupils is not consistently challenging. Teachers regularly share learning goals with pupils at the start of lessons and successfully review these in the closing part.

There is a purposeful working atmosphere in classes. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language. Those with behaviour difficulties are firmly but fairly managed by staff. Effective use of time-targets focuses pupils on what they are learning, particularly when they are working together in small groups. Teachers generally make good use of questions to check pupils' understanding but sometimes they move on to the next part of the lesson without making sufficient checks. As a result, the pace of learning slows and pupils start to lose interest.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory range of learning and other opportunities for its pupils. In recent years, staff have focused on literacy and numeracy with less emphasis on pupils' investigative and research skills. Now, greater links are developing between subjects such as history and science but these are not yet fully embedded. Improved computer resources are successfully supporting pupils' increased use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. The provision for pupils with additional learning needs makes effective use of a wide range of approaches to boost their achievement. More able pupils are not

consistently provided with work that fully challenges them. An appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, the teaching of a modern foreign language and residential visits make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school. Pupils particularly enjoy the themed weeks, recent examples of which have promoted reading, investigative science and fitness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff provide good pastoral care and support for all pupils and this helps them to build up their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils feel secure and valued in this calm and friendly school. They are confident about talking to adults if they have any difficulties. The school has effective systems to support pupils who do not attend regularly. It works closely with parents and outside agencies to support pupils with learning needs and provides good support for pupils with behavioural difficulties. Pupils support the school's behaviour policy and say that staff apply it fairly. Arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of pupils meet requirements. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has established robust systems to monitor pupils' standards and progress from term to term. Staff are making increasingly accurate use of this information to accelerate pupils' progress but the school has rightly identified the need to improve the rigour of assessment procedures in the Foundation Stage. In lessons, pupils are familiar with their class targets and understand what they are learning. Their work is regularly marked but teachers' use of written comments to highlight what individuals need to do to improve is not yet consistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior leadership team have shown great determination to make the improvements required to address the areas of weakness identified at the time of the previous inspection. Following the drive to raise attainment and establish higher expectations, the school is now in a much stronger position. Leaders have fully resolved the previous long-term absences of staff and difficulties in recruitment. As a result, all pupils are currently enjoying stability of teaching. Staff and governors now have a good understanding of the school's strengths and its areas for development. One of the most important changes is that staff now share this understanding and are working together as a team to make improvements. Subject leaders are increasing their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This understanding is strong in English, mathematics and science but now needs to develop in other subjects. Governance has improved and governors now have a much better understanding of the school and of their role in holding the school to account. The school now needs time to embed its new procedures and ensure that they all have positive effects on pupils' achievement.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
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
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

15 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's Primary and Nursery School, Spalding, PE11 2JQ

We really enjoyed our visit to your school because everybody was so helpful and friendly. Thank you for welcoming us so well. We think so much has improved in the school that it is no longer necessary for me to come regularly to check how well it is doing. We were very pleased to work with you in your classrooms, talk to you about your work and watch you play outside. We thought you would like to hear what we thought about your school and how it could get even better.

What we liked about your school:

- Mrs Beeken and other adults in the school look after you and make sure everyone behaves well and is happy.
- You behave well and work hard in class. You are friendly and are happy to talk about what you are doing.
- You enjoy lessons because your teachers make lessons interesting and fun. You have lots of interesting activities, sports clubs, trips out of school and visitors into school. All adults look after you really well and you say this makes you feel safe and secure in school.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants work hard and try to get it right for each of you.

What we have asked your school to do to make it even better:

- Make sure the work teachers set each of you is hard enough to make you think and stretches you further.
- Think of even more interesting and enjoyable ways for you to learn in different subjects by sometimes linking them together.
- Find out more about what is happening in subjects other than English, mathematics and science and share all the good things they find so that they can learn from each other and get even better.

You can help by working as hard as you can on your reading, writing and mathematics. We feel certain that everyone at the school will continue to work hard to help you learn. You have some challenging targets for 2008. Continue to work hard and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector