

St Paul's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115605
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	320529
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	R Bown
Headteacher	H Hutchison
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003
School address	New Street Gloucester GL1 5BD
Telephone number	01452 521872
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. When the school was inspected in September 2006, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give the pupils an acceptable standard of education. Since then Additional Inspectors have monitored the school on a regular basis.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Numbers on roll have stabilised after a recent reduction. The school receives additional funding in recognition of the socio-economic disadvantage experienced by many families within the local area. Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are above average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school fluctuates. In most years, it is below and in some years well below expected levels, especially in personal and social development and language skills. The headteacher took up her permanent post two weeks before the school was placed in special measures. There have been frequent changes of staff since the last inspection, but teachers in permanent posts now teach all classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. It has made rapid progress in almost all aspects of its work since it was inspected in September 2006. It is now a good school and serves its community well.

The most significant factor in bringing about this transformation is the overall good leadership and management and, in particular, the outstanding leadership of the headteacher who has high expectations of all those connected with the school. Other members of the senior management team are providing good support. Subject leaders are making an increased contribution to the leadership, but not all of them have the confidence and expertise needed to implement fully their leadership roles. The school has established very effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and this has helped identify where help is needed most. It has a detailed and accurate view of its performance and very clear procedures for addressing weaknesses. The improvement from being inadequate to a good school in little more than one year is impressive and a credit to all concerned. The school's capacity to improve further is good. Parents appreciate these improvements. One told an inspector, 'My children are making much better progress.' Another said, 'The children are happier now and definitely learning more.'

Teaching and learning have improved substantially and are now good. Teachers have responded well to guidance received from the headteacher and local authority advisers. The improved teaching has led to pupils making more rapid progress and an increase in standards across the school. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and make good progress in their first year in school. Most pupils in Years 1 to 6, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are making good progress, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. However, their overall achievement is satisfactory rather than good, because they are still catching up to their full potential following the time when many did not make enough progress. Although standards have risen, they remain below the national average, especially in writing, by the end of Year 6. Since the last inspection, when standards were exceptionally low, the school has understandably concentrated on English and mathematics, with less time and energy available to develop other subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum is satisfactory, with the usual range of subjects and many stimulating experiences. The school is beginning to strengthen the creative curriculum, but teachers are not making enough use of ICT to help teaching and learning in lessons or for pupils to use it enough when working on other aspects of the curriculum.

Parents appreciate the way the whole staff team provides all pupils with good care, guidance and support. Pupils' personal development and well-being have improved and are now good, and pupils clearly enjoy their time in the school. Pupils say they feel safe in school and talk confidently about how to take care of themselves. They are clear about the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise, and enjoy the daily 'wake and shake' sessions. The new Healthy School award recognises the school's work in this aspect.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision has improved and the staff team is led well. Many stimulating experiences are provided, although this does lead to some congestion and restricts independent movement around the

classroom and the small outdoor area. On entry, many children have limited social skills and a few are at an early stage of learning English. They quickly respond well to the warm and positive relationships within the class and learn to interact calmly with other children and the adults. They become engaged in the wide range of experiences indoors and out, for example exploring a dark cavern with torches, producing posters for a missing bear, or searching for frog spawn in the school pond. They make good progress in all areas of learning. Nevertheless, by the end of the year, although a few reach the learning goals for their age, many remain below them, especially in personal, language and mathematical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and raise standards, particularly in writing and by the older pupils.
- Strengthen the place of ICT across the curriculum and in its use to support teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Help subject leaders to gain the skills and confidence required to promote new developments in their subjects and hold colleagues to account for the quality of provision across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection, most notably in the national tests in Years 2 and 6 in 2007. A higher proportion of pupils are attaining the levels expected for their age. Nevertheless, standards remain below average, particularly in writing, by the end of Year 6. Pupils' progress accelerated last year and this is being maintained. Pupils of all abilities, and those who are learning English as an additional language, are making good progress. In most classes, but particularly in Year 2, significant proportions are making exceptional progress. This acceleration is helping pupils to catch up after previous periods of inadequate progress and their overall achievement is now satisfactory. Progress in writing, although at least satisfactory, is not fast enough, particularly in Years 5 and 6, to enable the pupils to make up all the lost ground. The school sets pupils challenging targets and carefully tracks their progress towards them. However, despite additional help being focused carefully where needed, pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 are unlikely to exceed the improved standards attained by last year's groups as too many of these pupils made inadequate progress in the past.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and learn to collaborate and play harmoniously. They reflect sensitively in assemblies about the values and needs of pupils from different backgrounds and how they can help one another. These are features of their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They appreciate the care received from the staff. When talking about this, one pupil said, 'They (the staff) always know when something is wrong.' Attendance remains below average. The school is doing all it can to overcome this with lots of rewards and support, but also robust actions in relation to the small minority of pupils whose attendance remains weak. Pupils are keen to help around school, for example as buddies or peer mediators, and the school councillors help run collections for local charities. These experiences help pupils gain a satisfactory level of skills needed for their next stage of education and adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There are several key factors to the significant improvements in teaching since the last inspection. The school has established clear expectations of teachers, including some 'non-negotiables', on how to plan lessons, manage a class and present their classrooms. Teachers have higher expectations of pupils and make good use of the much improved systems for assessing pupils' learning. They match work carefully to their different needs, supporting good learning by pupils of all abilities. Teachers provide opportunities for practical activities, such as devising experiments in science on elasticity, which motivate pupils, although occasionally teachers do not think through exactly what it is they want their pupils to learn from the activity. Classrooms are well equipped to support learning. However, not all teachers make best use of the interactive whiteboards to help with their teaching. Teachers make good use of teaching assistants who often take a lead with small groups and provide effective support for those pupils with learning difficulties or learning English as an additional language.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced and is carefully adapted to meet the needs of specific pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language. There has been an emphasis on English and mathematics whilst developments in other subjects have been slower. Nevertheless, there are some imaginative links between subjects, such as pupils producing working models of pneumatic bridges in design and technology as part of a study of rivers in geography. The strong focus on personal, social and emotional development successfully underpins the whole curriculum and promotes pupils' personal development. The school is now working on developing a more creative dimension within the curriculum. It has also identified the need to improve pupils' access to computers so they can learn more about how to use computers and then make better use of them in other subjects. There are many good enriching opportunities such as clubs, trips to the docks, the cathedral and records office, and other experiences such as tracking a hot air balloon.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Previous strengths in the care and pastoral support of pupils, especially those who are most vulnerable or have complex problems, have been built on further since the last inspection. However, the most striking improvement has been in the quality of academic guidance for pupils, which was inadequate and is now good and promoting higher standards. There is very careful monitoring of progress, from which realistic but challenging targets are set and shared with pupils. Pupils are encouraged to think about the next steps in their learning and helped by the many prompts in classroom displays and the constructive comments when teachers mark their work. Some older pupils would appreciate still more guidance about how to improve their writing. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very well coordinated. The school identifies their needs quickly and is good at bringing in parents and outside professionals, including the local authority, to help meet a pupil's specific needs. Procedures designed to safeguard pupils are implemented rigorously.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The rapid and sustained progress by the school is a direct outcome of the excellent leadership by the headteacher in the first instance and then, more recently, of the good leadership of the senior management team. The headteacher has an exceptionally well structured approach to improving the school and ensures everyone is clear about what is expected and how it can be achieved. There is now a sense of belief and commitment by long established staff and recent appointees alike. Progress is underpinned by frequent robust checks on all aspects of the school and the way information gained is used purposefully to improve practice. The headteacher has motivated colleagues whilst clearly raising expectations of them. Subject leadership has improved. Some subject leaders are relatively new to their roles. Continuous training is enabling them to participate in the checks on their areas of responsibility and to lead new developments. However, a few continue to lack confidence in checking the performance around the school, especially in holding colleagues to account, and others are slow to take initiative and be proactive with new ideas. Governance has also improved. Governors have attended training and recently introduced several new ways of working, including establishing an effective 'chairs of committees' group. They receive clear information about the school's performance, but their leaders are not fulfilling the role of critical friend sufficiently.

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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?	3
The standards ¹ 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 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	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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	3
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	3
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	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

12 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Paul's CE Primary School, Gloucester GL1 5BD

- Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing how much you all like being in school. I have visited your school four times and have seen how quickly it has improved. I am sure you will be as pleased as we are that St Paul's is now a good school and no longer requires what adults call 'special measures'. Here are some of the highlights we found during the visit.
- Your headteacher has worked exceptionally hard to help all the staff sort out the problems from the past.
- You enjoy your lessons and are making good progress with your work, especially in numeracy, reading and science.
- You behave well and take good care of one another. Lots of you have special jobs helping other children and organising things around the school.
- The teachers and their assistants plan many interesting things for you to do and learn about. They are good at helping you understand what you need to do next and how you can improve.
- Everyone who works in the school takes good care of you and makes sure you are safe. We are pleased that those of you who sometimes have a problem feel confident about asking one of the adults to help you.
- Most of you attend school regularly, although a few of you take too much time off school.
- Your parents are pleased you attend St Paul's and feel that it has become a good school.
- We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on these three things to make sure the school continues to improve.
- Carry on helping you to get better at your work in all subjects, but especially with your writing which some of you find difficult.
- Provide more chances for you to use computers when doing work in different subjects and help teachers to make more use of computers, including the interactive whiteboards, during lessons.
- Support some of the subject leaders who need help to carry out all their jobs.

We feel sure you will want to help the headteacher and everyone connected with the school make sure it becomes even better.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly Lead Inspector

Annex B

12 March 2008

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Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly
Lead Inspector