

St Paul's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105928
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	324296
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Marguerite McCloy HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	158
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Janet Wood
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Tyers
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Nevile Road Salford Manchester M7 3PT
Telephone number	0161 792 9474
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Paul's is a smaller than average sized primary school. It serves an area of Salford that is close to the boundary with Bury and includes a range of social and economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just above average. A well below average number of pupils is identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, although the number from minority ethnic groups has increased in recent years and is now just above average. The largest group represented is that of Eastern European heritage, and many of these are Polish. More than one fifth of pupils do not speak English as their first language and almost half of these are at an early stage of learning English. The school has achieved the Activemark award.

At the time of its last inspection in November 2007, St. Paul's was judged to be inadequate in its overall effectiveness and given a Notice to Improve. A subsequent monitoring visit in May 2008 found that the school was making satisfactory progress.

The new headteacher took up her post at the beginning of January 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Paul's is providing a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils. The school's previous inspection in November 2007 identified that Key Stage 2 pupils were making inadequate progress. Following this, the school took action with the support of the local authority. This led to improvements in mathematics and English so that Year 6 pupils in 2008 exceeded the school's targets and reached standards that were in line with national averages. Pupils' writing skills remain generally below average, although better than they were before the school placed a strong focus on this aspect of their work. Achievement and standards are satisfactory and there is a clear determination that they will rise further as the rate of improvement gathers pace. As a result of well targeted professional development and coaching with the support of local authority consultants, the quality of teaching is now good overall across the whole school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with good features. Effective transition has taken place to enable a smooth transfer of leadership, in which the commitment and professionalism of the deputy headteacher have been a key factor. The previous acting headteacher's evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development was accurate and formed a good basis for the new leadership team to build on. However, the school is aware of shortcomings in the training and development of middle leaders which prevent them from playing a fuller part in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

The curriculum is satisfactory and generally meets pupils' needs. However, the school recognises that the curriculum needs to have greater breadth and balance of learning activities in order to further develop the principles of excellence and enjoyment in learning.

Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good. They have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community, for example, by taking on responsibilities and through the well organised school council. Pupils enjoy school, are attentive in class and work hard to achieve. All staff are dedicated to providing high levels of care, guidance and support for the pupils, although academic guidance is not as fully developed as the school's pastoral care systems.

Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and appreciate what the staff, both past and present, do for their children. A typical comment was: 'My child has always gone to school happy and enthusiastic!'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) unit comprises a Nursery and a Reception class. Children enter with levels of development that are at or sometimes below those typical of most three and four-year-olds. Through rich learning experiences children make good progress so that most are working securely within the expected early learning goals by the time they leave the EYFS. A particular strength is the development of children's personal, social and emotional skills. They are nurtured by caring staff who know the children very well. Children respond well to being given responsibilities such as tidying the classroom and serving snacks, which they do independently and with confidence. Children are enthusiastic about their learning and eagerly engage in imaginative activities and tasks, making discoveries for themselves. For example, they showed great interest in noticing that ice cubes stick together, in finding elves in the outdoor play area and in making footprints.

The school is aware of shortcomings in its provision for outdoor learning and play and there are plans to replace some worn out resources. There is a clear focus on developing children's writing skills and staff are committed to providing further opportunities for this within outdoor play activities.

Leadership and management are good. The EYFS team work well together and teaching is good. There is an effective balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities and planning is very closely linked to pupils' observations. This enables staff to work flexibly, following the lead of children and enlarging upon their independent discoveries. Parents are well informed through daily diaries, weekly newsletters, twice-weekly drop in sessions and opportunities to have good contact with key workers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build upon recent improvements to raise standards and improve achievement in English and mathematics across the school, particularly in writing.
- Improve the quality and balance of the curriculum to better meet the needs and interests of all pupils and contribute to improving achievement.
- Develop the skills of middle leaders to make an effective contribution to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

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

Pupils' achievement across the school is satisfactory and standards of attainment are in line with national averages. Pupils enter Year 1 having reached most of the early learning goals expected for children of their age. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 to reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. There are fluctuations from year to year due to variations in the numbers of pupils and the proportion with additional learning needs. This was a key factor in the assessment results for seven-year-olds in 2008, which appeared to have declined from previous years. The group was a relatively small cohort which included a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The school has taken action to ensure that this year group receive additional, well focused support in Key Stage 2. They are also now taught in a single-age class for much of their time in Year 3. Inspection evidence and the school's assessment records show that these pupils are making at least satisfactory and sometimes, good progress.

The downward trend in pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 was halted in 2008. The proportion of 11-year-olds who attained expected levels in English, mathematics and science was marginally above the national average. Reading results remain stronger than writing, and fewer pupils than average achieved the higher level in each of the core subjects. The school's targets for Year 6 pupils' attainment in the 2009 tests have had to be adjusted due to some movement of pupils in or out of this group since Key Stage 1. The targets are challenging, but achievable when taking into account the improving rate of progress observed in lessons and in pupils' books.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy school because learning is fun and interesting. Most are keen to attend every day and arrive punctually; overall attendance is in line with the national average. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons and around the school; even when corridors are congested they are polite and unhurried. On the playground children play happily together, cooperating in games and sharing equipment. Pupils respond well to the responsibilities they are given and enjoy tasks such as acting as door monitors or helping with younger children. Some would like to take on more initiatives such as creating a garden and running a healthy snack tuck shop. School council members are confident, well organised and articulate, taking pride in what they have achieved. For example, their presentation of pupil views to the school leadership led to the completion of toilet refurbishments and purchasing of play equipment.

Pupils recognise what bullying means and know how to respond if any ever occurred, including any incidents of racist bullying, as they are aware of why this is unacceptable. Pupils would like to have a greater range of after-school clubs and more visitors into school to give performances and entertainment. Pupils are polite and helpful. They have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and enjoy active sports and eating a healthy lunch. Now that pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy are in line with national averages, they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education and future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The proportion of good or better teaching has increased since the last inspection as a result of the school's clear focus on professional development and training for staff. Good teaching was observed in all year groups but some lessons were satisfactory and the school recognises that teaching is not yet consistently good or better in all lessons. Staff are working together to remedy this in order to bring about more rapid improvement in pupils' learning.

A number of common strengths were seen in most lessons. Teachers make good use of interactive technology to enhance visual demonstrations and support pupils' learning. Skilled teaching assistants plan and work well alongside teachers to promote good achievement, for example, in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who are learning English as an additional language. Very good relationships exist between adults and pupils. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well; some are using assessment information particularly well to inform their planning and provide tasks which are well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers make good use of resources and questioning techniques to challenge pupils and promote their thinking skills.

In satisfactory lessons, those positive features are not as evident or consistent. For example, in some lessons the pace of learning is not as brisk and lively. On occasions, the less able pupils find the work too difficult and higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers now have better knowledge and good information about the levels at which pupils are working. However, it is not always made clear to the pupils what is required for them to proceed to the next level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a reasonably broad and balanced curriculum for its pupils. For almost two years it has been implementing a published curriculum scheme. This has been aimed at improving pupils' skills base and providing meaningful links between subjects to enhance learning. It has been effective in redirecting the school away from reliance on programmes of study within the National Curriculum. However, pupils' achievements in writing have remained below average. With the support of local authority consultants the school has placed a more rigorous focus on writing which is having a positive impact on improvements in this area. Teachers are now able to address gaps in writing to further improve pupils' skills.

There has been an understandable focus on English and mathematics to remedy the weaknesses identified by the last inspection. As teachers' skills and confidence have grown, there is now scope to review the curriculum to ensure greater breadth and balance. The school recognises a need to have greater ownership of the direction and content of what pupils will learn, increasing levels of challenge, enthusiasm and enjoyment to raise standards further. There is a satisfactory choice of after-school clubs, which are well attended, and plans are in place to extend the range of extra-curricular opportunities offered to pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

High levels of care and pastoral support are strengths of the school which ensure that pupils feel happy and safe and enjoy their education. Policies for the safeguarding of pupils' health, safety and welfare are all in place and procedures meet statutory requirements. Good arrangements are in place to support vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This includes specific guidance and support for minority ethnic groups, monitored closely by the learning mentor and support staff. Early identification aims to provide pupils with the specialist help they need and this is effectively incorporated into individual education programmes. As a result, all these groups of pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Generally, pupils are aware of how to improve their work through group targets; however, these lack precision in providing specific guidance for individual pupils to reach the next level of learning. Books are regularly marked but there is a lack of consistency in how pupils are guided to make improvements, as marking is often not linked to specific learning targets for individuals. The school actively seeks to engage parents in supporting their children's learning by providing information about targets and curricular themes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since the school's last inspection, the local authority have provided effective support in appointing two experienced acting headteachers at different periods of time to manage the school. Staff and parents express positive views on the contributions made by the well respected acting headteachers. The deputy headteacher has been instrumental in providing important support and continuity for the leadership of the school during this time. Her confidence and leadership skills have blossomed and the new headteacher has quickly recognised the potential of their strong partnership and complementary skills to move the school forward.

The headteacher is an experienced and effective leader who has a clear vision for the future of the school and its continued development. Staff and governors have confidence in the senior leadership and a positive team spirit is evident across the school. Teachers have a good understanding of their shared responsibility for ensuring that pupils make good progress and reach their potential. The role of teaching assistants has been developed well and they make an important contribution to pupils' learning.

Not all teachers or middle leaders have an understanding of how they can contribute to evaluating the impact of their work on outcomes for pupils. The roles and responsibilities of middle managers are currently underdeveloped. The school is ready to embark on training programmes for middle leadership now that staffing is more settled and performance management systems are fully established.

The school accurately judges its promotion of community cohesion as satisfactory. Leaders and governors recognise that there is more work to do to develop pupils' awareness of the diversity of British culture, and also of their wider local community, particularly in light of significant changes to the nature of its population in recent years.

The local authority has invested considerable time and expertise into supporting the school's improvement and will continue to monitor its progress while gradually reducing the level of additional resources provided. Governors are well informed and are able to hold the school to account for its performance. There is a strong sense of optimism about the school's future and a clear determination to bring about improvement and raise the profile of the school in the local community. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Its good capacity to improve is demonstrated by the impact of training and development on the quality of teaching and learning, and by the strength and stability of senior leadership.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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?	3

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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Paul's Church of England Primary School, Salford, M7 3PT

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views. You may remember that in its last inspection your school was given a 'Notice to Improve'. We found that the school has worked hard to make things better and St Paul's is now giving you a satisfactory education with a number of good features, too. Your deputy headteacher has worked very well with the two acting headteachers to lead and manage the school last year. Now that the deputy headteacher is working in partnership with your new headteacher, the leadership is settled and everyone is planning for the future to make the school even better.

In most of your lessons across the school, teaching and learning is good and occasionally, outstanding, so this is helping you to reach better standards in your work. You are cared for very well, and in return you look after each other and behaviour is good. You told us about how much you enjoy your school, and about the opportunities you are given to do responsible jobs there. We would like to say a particular 'thank you and well done!' to the school council. When she met with some council members, my colleague was very impressed with the way they had prepared for the meeting and were clear about the important things they wanted to tell her.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to continue to think about how to make things better so that the school improves even more and standards rise further.

To help with this, the school should review the curriculum to make sure that it meets everyone's needs. Some staff will also need more training in leadership skills so that they can play a bigger part in bringing about further improvements.

You can play your part by continuing to behave well in school and work as hard as you can in your lessons!