

St Paul's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114533
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	326031
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	633
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	Tony Davis
Headteacher	Pat Lock
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Horntye Road St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 6RT
Telephone number	01424 424530
Fax number	01424 717350

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Paul's is a very large primary school that serves a mixed area close to and beyond the town. Most children are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including statements of educational needs, is below average. Their needs are mainly concerned with speech, emotional, behavioural and physical difficulties.

Since the previous inspection, there have been substantial changes at all levels of senior leadership. The headteacher, who took up post just over two years ago, has been absent on sick leave since April 2009 and a senior advisory headteacher from the local authority is the acting headteacher. The local authority has recently completed a period of extended support. The school is a member of, and derives support from, the Hastings Excellence Cluster. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are in the Reception classes. The school provides a before-school breakfast club every day for pupils in Reception to Year 6. The school gained several national awards in 2006, including Healthy Schools Silver and Activemark Gold awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The Christian ethos of the school fosters a caring community and helps to promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are well looked after and consequently they feel secure and behave well. Well supported by the local authority, the steps taken over the past eighteen months to tackle underachievement are having a positive impact and pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory but recent upheavals and uncertainty at senior level is holding back better achievement.

Standards are improving after a recent decline. Children in Reception make a satisfactory start and, by the time they begin Year 1, their attainment is average. Continuing satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 means standards remain average in reading and mathematics. However, pupils do not reach the standards in writing of which they are capable by the end of Year 2. The proportion reaching higher levels in mathematics also lags behind national results. Appropriate steps are being taken to improve the teaching of writing and mathematics but these have yet to fully impact on raising attainment. Progress improves slightly in Years 3 to 6 so that by Year 6, standards are average in English and mathematics, with recent initiatives taken to improve teaching leading to improvement. The school knows some pupils should do better and is starting to remedy a backlog of underachievement through extra support. Improving science has not yet had the same focus and standards remain below average. Pupils' investigative skills are particularly weak. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

The recent strong focus on improving teaching is having a positive impact and the quality of teaching is now satisfactory. Teachers have welcomed the help they have been given to improve their teaching and are much more confident in planning work which challenges all pupils and enables them to make progress. There is some good teaching but this varies between classes. Teachers manage pupils well and have good relationships with them. However, pupils are not given regular enough opportunities to make decisions and solve problems and this causes some boredom. Work is sometimes too easy for more capable pupils and too hard for lower attainers. The satisfactory curriculum largely meets pupils' needs and steps are being taken to make it more relevant and exciting. Pupils of all ages are friendly and polite and have a good understanding about being healthy. Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and meet statutory requirements.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. Structures and systems have been overhauled to ensure a school of this size can be properly managed. The acting headteacher has tackled some of the outstanding issues with urgency and rigour. Already there is more ambition, and the impact of some recent initiatives has been marked, particularly in raising expectations and developing more consistent approaches. Some leaders, including the headteacher, have too many responsibilities. This hinders shared endeavour for improving the school. Some aspects of the school, such as assessment routines, have been slow to develop. Monitoring and self-evaluation are not robust enough to help leaders at all levels to pinpoint exactly how well different groups of pupils achieve so they can take speedy action to redress any underachievement. This hampers the school in judging the impact of initiatives to see how effective they are. Governors are well led by the chair and vice chair and the relatively new governing body are rapidly developing their skills in holding the school to account.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Transition from home to school is well managed and standards of care and safety are good throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. This helps children feel secure and happy. The great majority of children have attended pre-school and, on arrival, children's attainment is broadly as expected, although there is a wide range and writing is below expectations. Staff establish good routines and children behave well. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and, as a result, children make satisfactory progress. The school has recently stepped up the teaching of phonics, and grouping arrangements for phonics are having a good impact on helping staff to match work to the learning needs of the more capable children. During class lessons, teachers use a good range of practical approaches to interest the children but occasionally, learning activities are a little hard for lower attaining children or too easy for the more capable. There is a suitable balance between children learning for themselves and the direct teaching of basic skills by adults. However, role play areas are not always stimulating or well resourced. Teachers work hard to manage the lack of direct access from classrooms to outdoor play and ensure children spend plenty of time outdoors. Outdoor play is still developing to reflect learning indoors and adults do not always intervene enough to move the children on in their learning. Assessment is regular and computer based. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. A new leader has recently been appointed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' standards in writing and mathematics from Reception to Year 2, particularly for more capable pupils, and in science throughout the school.
- Ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good, especially in providing greater challenge and match of work and more opportunities for pupils to make decisions and solve problems.
- Ensure that monitoring and self evaluation are rigorous, and management responsibilities are shared evenly between senior leaders.

A small proportion of 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

When children enter Reception, their knowledge and skills are broadly as expected except in writing, which is below expectations. By the time children leave Reception, standards are average except in writing, which is still below average.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are improving after the large drop in standards in recent years for both Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. In Year 2, procedures to raise standards in writing and in mathematics for more capable pupils have yet to fully impact and standards are still too low in these areas. In 2008 Year 6 national tests, English standards were average, showing considerable improvement. Although showing signs of recovery, mathematics standards were still below average. Since then, teaching improvements and stronger catch-up programmes in mathematics are leading to more consistency between English and mathematics standards and improved achievement by Year 6. Science standards remain below average and investigative skills are especially weak.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school is calm and orderly and pupils say they feel safe. They are confident about whom to ask for help if someone is unkind to them. Pupils' spiritual and moral development are enhanced through close links with the church. Most of the time, pupils enjoy school and concentrate well. However, lessons do not always capture pupils' interest and then, although they behave well, their attention wanders and this prevents them making the most of school. The school takes a strong stance on punctuality and attendance. Although still a little below average, attendance is improving and few pupils are persistently absent. Pupils make a positive contribution through their school council work, acting as peer mediators and supporting charities. However, these activities do not routinely give all pupils the opportunity to make decisions and contribute to the life of the school. Pupils' satisfactory literacy and numeracy standards prepare them adequately for the future, although teamwork and problem solving skills are underdeveloped. Steps to promote community cohesion are satisfactory. There are increasing links with communities abroad and the school is developing its links with the UK community. This is appropriate as pupils' appreciation of the diversity of cultures in Britain is a weaker element.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although improving, there is not enough consistently good teaching within and across year groups. Teachers create a supportive climate for learning and teaching assistants are effectively used, particularly for supporting those who find learning difficult. Good features are the sharing of lesson purposes so that pupils know what is expected of them and teachers' checks to see how well pupils feel they have learned. Pupils mainly undertake activities prescribed by the teacher rather than working on tasks that require them to make decisions and solve problems. This means pupils do not yet have enough opportunity to take responsibility for their learning and take an active part in lessons. The most effective lessons are characterised by challenging activities that move pupils' learning forward at a fast rate. Where teaching is only satisfactory, it is generally because lessons are uninspiring and pupils are expected to spend too long listening and watching, and insufficient use is made of assessment information to match work to the needs of lower and more capable pupils. Marking is satisfactory but not consistently so. It does not always inform pupils about what they are doing well and what must be improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In Reception, all areas of learning are catered for, although the accommodation limits direct access to outdoor activities. In Years 1 to 6, there is a strong focus on English and mathematics. Plans are underway to systematically enliven pupils' learning through linking subjects and increase opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity. Occasional good links between subjects, for example in Key Stage 1 between literacy and science, bring learning alive and promote real enjoyment. In science, there is not enough attention to the development of pupils' investigative skills or the use of mathematics to record and evaluate results. The breakfast club supports working parents well and gives pupils a smooth start to the school day. A good variety

of enrichment activities, particularly sport, and collaboration with the Hastings Excellence Cluster enhance pupils' learning and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good and can be seen in the high levels of safety, care and welfare procedures. Child protection arrangements are fully in place. Good links with a wide range of external agencies support the needs of pupils with speech, behavioural or physical difficulties. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Procedures for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics have been clarified in the past few months. Class teachers are now monitoring pupils' performance carefully and checking how well their provision is ensuring pupils meet their targets. Appropriate targets are now being set for pupils in Key Stage 2. However, in Key Stage 1, a lack of consistency in the way pupils' progress is tracked means that challenging targets are not always set for the younger pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher has established a strong rapport with staff and has begun to remedy some of the school's weaknesses, for example in the deployment of senior and middle management so their skills can be used to best effect. The senior team and staff, united in their sense of purpose, are tackling the most pressing areas for raising achievement. Strong local authority support has helped to lift morale and enabled teachers to improve their teaching so that inadequate teaching has been eliminated. Restructuring of responsibilities has meant that senior and middle managers are more accountable for provision within phases, years and subjects. However, these leaders are hampered from taking a stronger part in school improvement because of a lack of robust systems to evaluate how well the school and pupils are performing. Although provision is monitored, it is not rigorous enough and there is insufficient analysis of how well different groups are performing and how well provision meets their needs. Governors have been empowered to develop their role so they can hold the school to account. They do not now hold back from asking the school challenging questions. The rate of recent improvement shows the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Partnerships with parents are satisfactory but the school recognises there is work to be done to enable all parents to become partners in their children's education.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	4
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**

7 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's Church of England Primary School, St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 6RT

You will remember that a team of inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well the school is doing. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with a number of you in lessons, looking at some of your work and meeting members of your school council. Thank you for making us welcome.

Firstly, you need to know your school gives you a satisfactory education and school staff are working hard to make this better. Here are some good things about your school:

- Those of you in Reception settle well and make a happy start.
- You are polite, get on with each other and behave well.
- When you are given responsibilities, you carry them out willingly and properly.
- The teachers and staff take good care of you in school.
- You are serious about the importance of eating healthily and you know you should not eat too many cakes and sweets.

Here are some things we are asking the school to do:

- Help those of you in Reception and Years 1 and 2 reach higher standards in writing and mathematics and help all of you to do better in science.
- Give you more chances to make some decisions and solve problems and make sure your work is never too easy or hard.
- Make sure all school leaders contribute equally to making the school better and check how well things are going.

I hope you will continue to try hard in all you do so that your work continues to improve.

Yours faithfully

Eileen Chadwick

Lead inspector