

St Paul's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105937
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	331140
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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)	165
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	Dr Steve Edwards
Headteacher	Mr Richard Chipchase
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Heathside Grove Walkden Manchester Greater Manchester M28 3NZ
Telephone number	0161 7908915

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

When St Paul's was last inspected in June 2008, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors subsequently visited the school on two occasions to monitor its progress. The reinspection was carried out by this inspector and an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school situated next to a Children's Centre which is managed by the governing body. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. The area served by the school is socially and economically disadvantaged. The proportions of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average, as are the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school has gained several awards including the Extended School Award, the Healthy School Award and the Physical Education (PE) Activemark.

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, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Since the previous inspection, when its effectiveness was judged to be inadequate, the school has made sustained progress in raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning. It now provides a satisfactory and improving education with a good standard of teaching. This is because of good leadership and management and advances in the quality of pupils' learning which are increasing the progress pupils make in lessons. Pupils are proud of their school, behave extremely well and can see the impact of recent changes. They strongly agree that teaching is much better with increased opportunities for them to be involved in their learning by investigating, using their thinking skills and by finding things out for themselves.

Parents, too, have recognised that the school is improving. One parent's view was typical of many: 'My child enjoys school now.' Others commented: 'The school makes my child feel excited and happy', and, 'Everything is much better now'. The school has an increasingly positive reputation in the local community and there are good partnerships with parents, other schools and local agencies.

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. They have positive attitudes to their work and are caring and considerate towards each other. They make good contributions to the life of the school to help it run smoothly. They always try their best and are keen to succeed. They enjoy school a great deal which is demonstrated by their improving attendance and their enthusiasm for the wide range of opportunities that the school provides. Pupils speak highly of staff and feel safe and secure in school. They have a good awareness of maintaining a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and a balanced diet. Overall, pupils make steady progress towards securing their future economic well-being.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are now making satisfactory progress from Year 1 to Year 6. The proportion of pupils reaching the level expected at age 11 in reading and mathematics is broadly average and above average in science. A significant factor in this better progress is that teaching is now good overall with elements of outstanding practice. However, pupils' writing skills remain below average and pupils do not progress as rapidly as they should. This is because the development of creative opportunities for pupils to practise and hone their writing skills across the curriculum is not sufficiently well planned.

The school is driven forward by good leadership and management and governance. There is a good understanding of where the school can improve further through a regular cycle of self-review. For example, an accurate evaluation of the school's work has enabled senior leaders to build a clear vision for the future by setting the school on a clear path to further improvement. In doing so, they correctly recognise that the school improvement plan requires fine-tuning to ensure an even greater focus on accelerating progress in writing and sharper criteria for measuring success. Middle leadership has improved well in literacy and numeracy. However, the school is aware that not all subject leaders are fully accountable for planning and driving through improvements in their areas. This prevents them from playing a full part in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

Considering the advances made since its last inspection and along with its other strengths, particularly in improving pupils' progress and other aspects of its provision, the school has good capacity to improve further and it now provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are well below those typical for their age, particularly in language and communication. They make a good start, settle quickly and achieve well. This is because children are very well cared for, staff have high expectations and relationships are strong. The quality of teaching is good. Activities are well targeted on key areas of learning that match well with children's stages of development. For example, in one session children made good progress in their mathematical understanding and language development by discussing and identifying a range of different shapes with skilful questioning and prompting by the class teacher. Elsewhere, a group of boys displayed good social skills in working together to make a pirate ship. As a result, children show positive attitudes to their work, become absorbed in their learning and have increasing confidence to initiate activities for themselves as well as follow clearly established routines. Staff are ever watchful over children's safety and well-being and continually assess how well children are achieving. They use this information well to plan further challenges. This means that by the start of Year 1, most children are approaching the levels expected of them and have made good progress from their starting points. Parents are kept well informed and are encouraged to become actively involved in their children's learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Staff regularly review the impact of their work in order to keep on improving the provision. Good links with Year 1 help to ensure continuity in learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in writing by the end of Year 6.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in different areas across the curriculum.
- Develop the role of subject leadership so that all leaders assume responsibility, are supported with and accountable for their work and make an effective contribution to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

A small proportion of the schools whose 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' current work and provisional assessments for 2009, together with the school's own data show that pupils' achievement is now satisfactory and standards of attainment are broadly in line with national averages. Pupils enter Year 1 approaching the levels expected for their age. Progress accelerates rapidly in Years 1 and 2. In 2009, teacher assessments, moderated by the local authority, show standards at age seven are securely in line in reading, writing and mathematics with the expected National Curriculum Level 2. All pupils achieved a Level 2 in writing and 20% of pupils reached the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics, an increase of 14% over the year.

In Key Stage 2 work in lessons and in pupils' books shows that progress by the end of Year 6 has improved and is now securely at a satisfactory level overall. This is also the case with the work of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards are broadly average in reading and mathematics and above average in science at the expected Level 4, as reflected in

the latest provisional results for 2009. A notable success is that the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 is above average in mathematics and science. However, standards in writing remain well below average and pupils' progress is not rapid enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Discussions with pupils quickly reveal their positive enjoyment of school life and this is backed up by observing them in lessons and around school. They talk enthusiastically about improvements in lessons and of the increased opportunities to work independently and 'to do more investigative work'. They quickly reel off a long list of topics that have caught their imagination such as the Victorians, the Aztecs, Aliens and Pirates. They also value the good range of trips and visits the school provides. They are emphatic when stating that the school deals promptly and effectively with any falling out between pupils that can sometimes occur, albeit rarely. Behaviour is outstanding. The older pupils set an excellent example in whole-school events such as assembly. The supportive way in which pupils treat each other and people from other backgrounds confirms their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils say the school community is safe and happy. They are knowledgeable about important aspects of safety such as how to protect their identity when using the internet and which sites to avoid. Pupils have a good level of knowledge about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. They enjoy their physical education lessons and the good range of clubs available to them. Many make contributions to the school community through school council membership, acting as class and school monitors and helping younger children at playtimes. Pupils help the wider community through a range of fundraising activities. Attendance is average and improving, reflecting the school's effective systems for increasing it. The pupils' level of readiness for moving on to the next stage of their education is satisfactory. The security of their skills in numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet matched by similar skill levels in writing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A sustained and concerted whole-school focus has led to improved teaching and learning. Lessons now typically see busy pupils responding with enthusiasm to the increased opportunities to apply their thinking skills and to work independently. Enthusiastic and confident teachers, often in partnership with colleagues, are now planning more frequently imaginative classroom activities that excite and motivate the pupils. When the planning and teaching are at their best the impact on the children's work is outstanding, as when Year 2 children stepped back in time through the magic mirror to a Blackpool holiday one hundred years ago. The lively and confident style of the postcards they subsequently wrote was a delight to read. This lesson confirmed just how well the pupils can achieve when expectations are high and the teaching imaginative. The use of role-play that effectively challenges pupils' creativity and thinking is emerging as a consistent strength. Teachers are raising their expectations with regard to the amount of extended writing the pupils produce, but this lacks consistency. Teachers' planning is achieving a better match between the abilities of the pupils and the work they do, but again, not always consistently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There has been considerable improvement in the quality of the curriculum. This is evident in the enthusiasm pupils show in lessons and when talking about what they do. A carefully planned switch to a more topic-based approach sees pupils relishing the chance to think for themselves at a more demanding level. The depth to which subjects other than literacy and numeracy are covered has increased notably so providing considerably more variety. There has also emerged a wider range of enrichment activities such as educational visits and visitors to the school. The new curriculum is starting to provide more explicit chances for pupils to improve their writing in other subjects but these are not yet consistently or sufficiently in place. The pupils' good personal development confirms the effectiveness of the school's personal, social and health education programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All adults who work in the school display good levels of commitment to the pupils' welfare. As a result, this is a calm and orderly school where children are well cared for in a supportive environment. Procedures for child protection are in place and kept under review. Safeguarding arrangements comply with statutory requirements. Effective monitoring tracks pupils' progress well. It provides a good basis for arranging additional support for those who need it and is therefore impacting positively on the improved progress that is now established. Marking is usually thorough and indicates suitable ways of improving. It does not always make clear consistently enough what the pupils have done well. The school works well with an appropriate range of organisations outside the school to ensure the pupils' welfare is well maintained. There are good arrangements to help Year 6 pupils move onto their high schools. Relationships with parents are good. The recently established parents' council is leading to better communications with parents and gives greater prominence to their views.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management lie at the heart of the school's steady recovery and increased effectiveness. Central to this improvement is the school's stronger monitoring of its performance and the drive and commitment of staff to get the school back on track so all pupils have an equal chance to do well. Over the year the pace of change has accelerated. Teachers are far more accountable for their work and efforts have been clearly focused on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning. As a consequence, teamwork is good and staff are forward-thinking and reflective in their practice. As a group they know the school well and actively seek out ways to improve further the current position. For example, the school is well aware that the role of subject coordinators is still underdeveloped. Despite some significant improvements in the leadership of core subjects, the quality of leadership is less secure in other subjects. Not all staff understand fully their role as leaders and, as yet, have not received the support required to develop their leadership skills further.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Opportunities that develop pupils' awareness of other faiths and cultures in their own community and further afield are carefully

planned and sensitively delivered across the curriculum through discussions with visitors, assemblies and special themes and projects.

Governance is much improved. The governing body plays an increasingly effective role in shaping the school's direction and holding it to account. They are well informed about the school's performance and are confident to act when necessary to support improvements or to question proposals.

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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	1
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	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

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

Inspection of St Paul's Church of England Primary School, Walkden, Manchester, M28 3NZ

Thank you very much for the friendly way in which you helped Mr Griffin and me when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed chatting to you in the playground, in your classrooms and in the pupil interview. We decided that your school no longer requires special measures. We are pleased to tell you that your school has improved well and is now giving you a satisfactory education. This is because your teachers have worked very hard to make sure that you make better progress than before and that you are more involved in your work.

You told us that your school is a happy and safe place to be. We agree. You told us how much you love your school and having spent the two days with you we can understand why. We were delighted to see how well you behave and how you help one another in class and around the school.

You told us that you are increasingly excited by your work and that your teachers help you to learn well by making your lessons interesting and often fun. We could see this with our own eyes when those of you in Year 4 were writing letters to a supermarket to persuade them not to build a new store on the Blackleach wildlife site. You really impressed us with the improved quality of your writing. Your replies had good introductions, possessed lots of juicy bits in the middle and certainly packed a punch at the end. They were all very good but we particularly liked the examples when some of you wrote, 'I demand that you reconsider'. 'I am distraught and flabbergasted by your decision to build on this land.' 'I am sickened to the core'. 'What will happen to the wildlife?'

Mr Chipchase and all the staff work very hard to improve the school. To help them we have asked if you can make faster progress in your writing and that more of your lessons give you opportunities to use your writing skills in lots of different areas. We have also asked whether some of your teachers could have extra help in improving their leadership skills so that they can play a bigger part in bringing about further improvements in the school.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by having the confidence to practise your writing skills in lots of different subjects. We wish you well for the future and can see why your teachers enjoy working with you every day.