

St Paul's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120173
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313542
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Frances Gillam

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Clay
Headteacher	Cal Hurst
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
School address	Meadow Road Woodhouse Eaves Loughborough LE12 8SA
Telephone number	01509 890483
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Paul's is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than in most schools. Almost all pupils come from a White British background. A few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post five weeks. She is the sixth headteacher appointed in the last five years.

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 a satisfactory school. After a period of significant disruption, the school is now poised to move forward and to make further improvement. This is because the school has halted the decline in standards by Year 6. The clear vision of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the teamwork of staff and governors, and the strong focus now on raising standards and improving pupils' achievements underpin this capacity to improve further.

Predominantly, satisfactory teaching enables pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to do as well as expected and reach above average standards by the time they leave the school. Teachers praise pupils' achievements and value their efforts. These features encourage pupils to work hard and develop trusting relationships. Pupils say that some lessons are more fun than others. This in turn means their learning does not always excite them. Pupils enjoy the challenge of mathematics lessons where they say there is a good mix of working together, finding things out for themselves and learning through games, features they say are not always present in other subjects. Although improving pupils' writing skills is a key priority, inconsistencies in achieving this are evident across the school. In the Foundation Stage, for example, there are not enough opportunities across the areas of learning for children to develop their writing skills fully. This limits pupils' confidence as capable writers in Years 1 and 2, especially for the boys, and slows pupils' progress by Year 6. The satisfactory curriculum provides some good opportunities to develop numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across other subjects. These promote some good learning and heighten pupils' interest but this is not happening so well in literacy, where pupils say they do not always have enough chances to express their own ideas and views in writing.

Pupils' personal development and well-being and the care, guidance and support they receive are satisfactory. Pupils are friendly and polite. Their good behaviour and the respect they have for others lead to a calm, well-ordered school. Pupils act safely and they move around the school carefully and with good attention to others. Pupils feel protected and parents say their children are well cared for. The good emphasis staff place on healthy lifestyles helps pupils to make sensible choices about their diet. The good range of clubs and visits to places of interest enhance the curriculum and contribute well to the pupils' personal development and well-being. The school council plays an active role in making their school a better place to be and pupils are eager to raise charitable funds because they want to help others less fortunate than themselves.

Satisfactory leadership and management ensure the systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work identify the right priorities for development but the action taken has not always been successful. This results in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, pupils' learning, and the curriculum, most notably in writing.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with attainment above that expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and, on entry to Year 1, most children exceed the expectations for their age. Children are happy and settle quickly. This is because staff treat them fairly and support their efforts. Curriculum planning is developing but is not yet ensuring that children have enough scope, for example, to develop independent writing through a variety of play and role-play situations.

Support for children who struggle with letter formation is not good enough and this leads to difficulties with recording later on, especially for boys.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure children in the Foundation Stage, and especially boys, get a better start in learning to write
- provide more opportunities throughout the school for pupils to develop their writing skills across all subjects
- ensure better ways to motivate and engage pupils in their learning
- strengthen monitoring and evaluation procedures to make sure that whole-school initiatives are implemented fully and working successfully.

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are above average by Year 6. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress. The school has not always attained the challenging targets it sets for the end of Year 6 tests. However, in the 2007 national tests it did so, and a much higher percentage of pupils attained the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Recent developments are beginning to 'bite', especially in mathematics, and these have halted the downward trend in tests results. Although in 2007, tests results improved in writing by Years 2 and 6, pupils say their work is not always as exciting in English as it is in mathematics. Some question why they practise, for example, story 'openers' but never finish the story. Boys especially say they would like more opportunities to write about things of interest to them. Pupils, generally, do not have enough good opportunities to apply their writing skills across the curriculum.

Children in the Foundation Stage make a satisfactory start, although they could be doing better, especially in developing the necessary skills to become competent writers. This is truer for boys, whose rate of progress is slower than that of girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles. They carefully consider what they choose to eat and they participate enthusiastically in physical activities. Pupils are very positive about feeling safe and secure in school. They have a strong sense of their own and others' safety. For example, when listening to a story, children in the Reception Year cautioned one another not to drink water unless they knew it was from a safe source. Relationships are strong and pupils have a good understanding of moral and social issues. The school council is an important vehicle for pupils' voices. A strong sense of belonging helps pupils to care for each other. They understand that beyond the school is a wider community, in which they play an active part, for example supporting church events and charities. Their understanding of Britain as a diverse society is satisfactory. Attendance is good but although pupils say they like school, their enjoyment of learning is mixed. Not all pupils display sufficient confidence to enable them to

be fully effective learners as individuals and as participants in group activities. Pupils' progress in developing key skills in literacy and numeracy prepare them satisfactorily for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils' good behaviour contributes to positive relationships and a friendly working atmosphere in lessons. Teachers plan lessons with a balance of sharing information with pupils, pupils finding things out for themselves and pupils coming together at the end of the lesson to discuss their learning. In Year 6, for example, this works well but in other year groups, the balance is sometimes unequal because teachers' explanations go on for too long. This squeezes the time for either group or independent tasks and pupils do not have time to complete their work. More often, this is in writing activities and this does not allow pupils to progress as quickly as they might. Some good quality questioning is probing and challenges pupils to think deeply and to provide mature and thoughtful answers. This is effective in developing discussion but is not a strong feature in all classes. Marking has improved since the previous inspection and this gives pupils useful information about how well they are doing and how they can do even better. Assessment procedures have also improved. These provide clear information to help teachers plan the next steps in learning. However, this is not always effective in the Foundation Stage, where staff do not check frequently enough children's ability, for example, to form letters.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Opportunities to develop key skills across the curriculum have improved in mathematics and ICT since the previous inspection but writing opportunities remain weaker across the age range. This is because some opportunities are not sufficiently varied or motivating, especially for boys. The strong emphasis on personal, social and health education, and the good variety of activities outside normal lessons, including sports clubs and residential experiences, promote some aspects of pupils' personal development well. Recent initiatives have strengthened curriculum planning. However, these are relatively new and not yet firmly established to ensure pupils' good progress from one year group to the next, especially between the Foundation Stage and Year 1.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff are highly committed to the care of individuals. They routinely remind pupils about healthy and safe practices and this contributes well to pupils' personal development and well-being. The school has recently reviewed and strengthened further the satisfactory procedures for safeguarding pupils. Careful scrutiny of individual pupils' needs enables early identification of those at risk and provides appropriate support, including good use of outside support agencies. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Recent developments in target-setting have strengthened provision and have included good involvement with parents. Although pupils say their targets are helpful in guiding their learning, it is too soon for these targets to be fully effective in promoting pupils' good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Systems to check the school's effectiveness are satisfactory. Senior managers, staff and governors have a secure view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They identify the right priorities for improvement but action to bring about change for the better has been inconsistent, especially in writing. Improvement in English has been slower than in other areas because of the disruptions to subject leadership. Senior managers are beginning to check more thoroughly the effectiveness of strategies to improve writing, and tracking pupils' progress is now secure. This is beginning to tease out where differences lie in teaching, pupils' learning and the curriculum but the action taken is not yet robust enough to iron out these inconsistencies, especially in writing.

Governors give good support to the school. Information, for example from tracking pupils' progress, enables them to raise more probing questions about the school's effectiveness. Links with parents are strengthening. They feel the future is brighter for the school and they say they are pleased with the appointment of the new headteacher.

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 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	2
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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
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 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	3
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

12 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's Church of England Primary School, Loughborough, LE12 8SA

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about all the things you are doing.

The people in charge and your teachers do a satisfactory job and this is helping you to make satisfactory progress. The standards you attain by the time you leave school are above average.

Here are some of the good things we found about your school:

- your behaviour and attendance are good
- you are polite and friendly and get on well together
- you make sensible choices about your diet and take plenty of exercise because you understand how important it is to grow up healthy and fit
- you make good use of the sporting clubs on offer and you say you enjoy trips to places of interest
- you feel well cared for because teachers look out for you and you know how to keep safe and free from harm.

To improve the school still further we have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on four things:

- to make sure that children in the Reception Year make a better start in writing
- to make sure all of you have good opportunities to develop your writing skills in other subjects
- to find ways to make all of your lessons exciting so that you enjoy your learning and do even better in your work
- to check that strategies to help you improve are really working well and that all teachers are using these strategies effectively to help you with your work.

With best wishes for the future,

Fran Gillam Lead Inspector



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