

Inspection of St Paul's CofE (C) Primary School

Byatts Grove, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 2RH

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff are 'proud to be a part of St Paul's'. The new headteacher and deputy headteacher are making a real difference. In a short space of time, they have brought about many improvements. There is still more to do. Staff morale is high. Staff say, 'We feel cared for, listened to and supported.'

Pupils cover all the subjects they ought to. They like the clubs and visits that go alongside the curriculum. Not all subjects are planned well enough to help pupils learn as much as they should. Not all pupils read to adults as often as they need to. Pupils enjoy books and the reading areas in classrooms. They want teachers to read to them more often.

The school's new behaviour policy has had a positive impact. Leaders live and breathe the school values of compassion, endurance and friendship in a way that helps others to live by them, too. Pupils like the focus of these values. They feel safe. They know what adults expect of them. An echo frequently heard was the improvement in behaviour now. Pupils say systems are firm but fair, and clear and carried through. Staff deal effectively with bullying when it happens.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

New leaders have quickly got to grips with the priorities for the school. They have shown grit and determination in tackling poor behaviour, improving staff morale, and beginning to think about the curriculum. Their actions have already started to have an impact. But it is early days, particularly for the curriculum.

Teachers plan curriculum subjects, supported by units of work that are already in place. In some subjects, teachers are much clearer about what pupils are expected to learn. In other subjects, this is less so, especially in English. This leaves pupils learning many different things, but not always in a way that helps them build on what they know. This prevents them from making deep connections between their learning. This is also true of the early years. The quality of curriculum organisation does not give all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), enough opportunity to be successful.

Subject leaders are very keen to improve the curriculum. Up until now, they have had limited opportunities to get to know their subject well, or to see what works and what does not. This means they have had very little influence on the way their subject is planned, taught and checked.

Early reading is planned and sequenced in a way that helps pupils build up a bank of sounds and words over time. However, due to staff changes and absence, the teaching of this is inconsistent. Lower-attaining pupils do not read frequently enough to staff to become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils appreciate the recently revamped reading corners in the classroom and would like their teachers to share stories with them for pleasure.

Staff are caring, nurturing and know the children well in the early years. The outdoor area is spacious and allows children to be physical and to grow plants. Children enjoy being outside. They challenge themselves to improve at scoring goals, swinging on equipment and drawing. However, pupils do not get a strong start to their learning. This is because adults have not set out what it is they want children to know. Nor do staff take every opportunity to develop children's language. This prevents children from building their learning over time and developing a wide vocabulary with which to communicate.

What pupils at St Paul's do get, however, is a dedicated team of staff who see and meet the needs of the whole child, including pupils with SEND and their families. Nothing is too much trouble, from the giving of food when needed, to helping pupils have a school uniform to wear with pride. One parent, echoing the views of many, said, 'Everyone here cares about the children.'

Pupils care about each other. They rate highly the different jobs they do to help their peers, such as play and mental health leaders. They are respectful of each other and each other's faiths and beliefs.

Pupils know the dangers that they may come across in their lives, including drugs, social media and racism. They talk confidently about the actions they would take to keep safe in different situations.

The governing body has recently undergone some changes. New appointments have been made with a clear purpose of strengthening the skills and expertise moving forward. Leaders and staff are committed to improving the quality of education. Much has been achieved in a short period of time.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are tenacious in using every piece of information they have to build a picture of what help a pupil needs to be kept safe. They are swift to act on this information. Leaders work with a range of agencies to make sure pupils and families get the right help at the right time. They are confident to challenge and continue to challenge if the help is not forthcoming.

Leaders make the right checks on staff when they start school. This means that leaders know the adults are safe to work with children.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Reading has not always been the high priority it needs to be. The teaching of phonics is inconsistent, lower-attaining readers do not read often enough and teachers do not read regularly to their classes for pleasure. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that reading is prioritised. They should provide training on the teaching of reading. Teachers should ensure that they hear lower-attaining pupils read regularly and create time to share stories, in all year groups.
- The English curriculum is not well planned or sequenced. This means that pupils do not achieve what is expected for their age. Leaders need to structure the content of the English curriculum so that teachers know what to teach and when it should be taught. Leaders also need to provide early years' staff with training in communication and language so that the number and quality of interactions improve and build children's language effectively.
- Currently, curriculum planning does not help teachers to plan effective sequences of lessons. This means that teachers do not plan and deliver lessons that build pupils' knowledge well over time. Senior leaders should ensure that curriculum leaders, including those in the early years, receive training to develop effective subject plans that are delivered well.
- Subject leaders are new to fulfilling the responsibility and expectation of their role. They have not yet supported the whole-school development of their subjects. Senior leaders need to provide subject leaders with the right training and opportunities to develop their confidence and expertise in monitoring and improving their subject, including its place within the early years.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	124227
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10212248
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Barbara Burton (Acting)
Headteacher	Deborah Sadler
Website	www.stpaulsprimaryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 and 6 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher took up their post in January 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Currently, there is no nursery provision.
- A Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's CofE Primary School as a Church of England school took place on 24 September 2015. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, English, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and Lichfield Diocese.
- The lead inspector met remotely with four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. They spoke formally with groups of pupils as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's online parent, pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors met with leaders about the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke to pupils, parents and carers, and staff about pupils' safety.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and information on the school's website.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector

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