

Inspection of St Paul's CofE Primary School

Victoria Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE4 7JU

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 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

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have responded with compassion to recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic within the community. The high-quality pastoral care for pupils and their families is a key feature of the school's work. However, the quality of education pupils receive is not as well developed.

Leaders welcome pupils from many different countries. Pupils appreciate the times when they can talk openly about their past and find out more about each other. However, learning from and about pupils' heritage is not promoted in the curriculum to its fullest extent.

Pupils are happy to come to school. They feel safe and know that adults care about them. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and on the playground. Older pupils guide younger pupils in their play. Most pupils say that bullying does not happen. They say that if it does, staff deal with it well.

Opportunities in the wider curriculum help to develop pupils' character. Pupils are proud to be elected to the school council. Councillors take this role very seriously and suggest events that all can benefit from, such as movie night. Pupils enjoy a range of after-school activities such as chef club, multi-sports and science club.

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

Leaders are in the process of reviewing some curriculum subject areas. However, the overarching curriculum planning cycle does not marry with the school organisation. The planning does not take into account the journey of some pupils in mixed-age classes. This means that some pupils miss out on some of the key learning that they need for their next stage in education. The governing body and senior leaders are aware of the curriculum gaps. They have not acted quickly enough to address them.

Some subject curriculum areas such as mathematics and science are better developed than others. There is detailed planning, with small steps in learning identified. Pupils achieve well in these subjects. Teachers are clear about the curriculum end points and check that pupils are on track to reach them. In subjects such as history and art the listed vocabulary and underpinning concepts do not always match the expectations of the national curriculum. This means that pupils do not have the same level of knowledge and understanding of some key concepts as that of their peers. Leaders are in the process of identifying key concepts that will thread through the curriculum.

Leaders have invested in a highly structured phonics programme. In some classes pupils are successful in learning phonics. However, the ambition of the programme is being undermined by the way in which it is delivered. Some staff distract pupils from focusing solely on learning phonics. They are trying to be helpful by connecting the

words made by phonics to real life stories. However, for some pupils this is too much information. Some pupils are not learning to read quickly enough. Some pupils read books containing sounds that they have yet to learn. This is a barrier to reading fluently and can be demoralising. Some pupils in early years and key stage 1 do not read at home. Few books in early years reflect the wide diversity in pupils' home language and culture.

Well-developed plans are in place with targeted support to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve the best that they can. Adaptations such as simplified instructions and visual prompts support pupils in their learning. The special educational needs coordinator makes referrals to partner agencies for those who need further support. Leaders learn as much as possible about pupils transferring into school. They work with parents and services to ensure a smooth transition.

Pupils are polite and respectful. They are attentive in listening to staff and share resources well. Attendance is improving. Leaders follow up pupils' absence and work with families to highlight the importance of coming to school.

Pupils' personal and social development is a strength. Pupils have an excellent understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils relish the educational visits that are undertaken. They look forward to the residential visit to France in Year 6. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to be healthy, in terms of diet and emotional and physical health. Pupils are curious about their own and each other's background. However, the curriculum and resources do not reflect the rich cultural heritage of pupils.

Children in the early years access a broad curriculum. Teachers ensure there are many learning activities to further develop both fine and gross motor skills. Staff encourage children to explore and take interest in the world around them. However, children tend to play on their own, alongside their peers, rather than play with them. This means opportunities to have conversations are missed.

Leaders take staff's well-being seriously and staff say they feel valued members of a supportive team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive a range of safeguarding training. All staff know the school systems for reporting safeguarding concerns. Leaders respond swiftly to any issues raised. They refer to external agencies when appropriate.

Leaders are aware of local safeguarding concerns within the community. They are liaising with police and appropriate authorities to adopt a joint response to these concerns.

Leaders encourage pupils to raise any worries with staff. However, pupils can only do this by talking directly with staff, rather than through more anonymised ways. This means that less confident pupils might not share their concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not designed well enough to teach all of the national curriculum content to the mixed-ages classes in the school. This means that some pupils have gaps in their learning and this has an impact on their readiness for their next stage of education. Leaders should review the curriculum planning to ensure all pupils access a curriculum of at least comparable breadth to the national curriculum.
- In some subjects, pupils are not learning key vocabulary that is identified in the national curriculum. Other words have been selected. This limits pupils' knowledge and understanding of key concepts underpinning the key vocabulary. Leaders should review the curriculum to ensure that the ambitions for pupils' vocabulary and understanding are at least as ambitious as the national curriculum.
- The way in which phonics is taught is not supporting pupils to learn to read quickly enough. Teachers do not focus sufficiently on teaching core phonics knowledge. They cloud the teaching by distracting pupils with other activities and conversation. This means pupils are confused about what they are learning at that point. Leaders should review phonics teaching to ensure that teachers ensure pupils know the basic sounds and how to apply them before moving on to more complex work.
- Pupils at this school share a variety of cultural backgrounds. There are limited opportunities, including through reading material, throughout the curriculum for pupils to find out about and celebrate this diversity. Leaders should ensure that more opportunities to raise awareness of cultural diversity are present within the curriculum.
- Staff do not ensure that children actively talk to one another during their play in the early years. This means that opportunities to make friends and develop vocabulary are missed. Leaders should ensure that staff exploit every opportunity to facilitate conversations between children.

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.

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	108502
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10241564
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	George Curry
Headteacher	Judith Sword
Website	www.stpauls.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England school. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in June 2017. The next section 48 inspection will be within eight years of that date.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader, the special educational needs coordinator, and representatives of the local governing body. The lead inspector met with the local authority education adviser who supports the school.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in four subjects: reading, mathematics, history and geography. 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 looked at curriculum documentation for these and other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspectors scrutinised the single central record and reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems. The inspectors spoke to leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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