

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Paul's CofE (C) Primary School

Garden Street, Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 4BT

Inspection date:

18 March 2025

Outcome

St Paul's CofE (C) Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils and staff follow their 'rainbow values' of respect, excellence, perseverance, belief and courage, equality, honesty, friendship and love. The values help pupils understand how to behave. As a result, pupils are confident, well-mannered and welcoming. There is a consistent, warm and nurturing environment where staff know and understand pupils well. Pupils know that staff are there to help them if they have any worries or concerns. This makes pupils feel secure and they are happy at school.

The school has high ambitions for pupils' achievements. Pupils are eager to learn. They understand that staff expect them to work hard and do their best. Pupils achieve well and are well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils, including children in the early years, support each other with their learning. Older pupils are reading buddies for younger children. They enjoy reading together and discussing different books. Pupils recall with great enthusiasm the educational trips they have experienced to farms and gardens where they learn about the natural world. Older pupils benefit from exciting residential visits where they develop their independence.

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

The school is highly ambitious for its pupils. It has designed a curriculum that begins in early years, where the school has thought about the essential foundations that children need for future learning. Lessons are connected to help pupils build knowledge effectively. For example, in the autumn term, Reception children learn about the work of vets and visit a local veterinary practice. This knowledge helps them to understand about caring for

pets in the spring term. Across the school staff thoughtfully adapt resources to enable pupils to be successful. The school provides pupils with personal electronic tablets on which content can be tailor-made for individual pupils. There is robust and resolute commitment to ensuring pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified. These pupils are expertly supported to access learning through well-considered adaptations. They are fully included in all aspects of school life.

Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and they present new information clearly. Staff provide clear, direct feedback to pupils. They check pupils' understanding systematically and quickly address misconceptions. This means that pupils do not repeat errors. In class pupils are engaged and show strong learning behaviours. They work together cooperatively and can explain what they are learning. Pupils take pride in their work.

Reading is prioritised. Right from the start children get opportunities to enjoy quality texts. The phonics scheme is delivered effectively and expertly. Pupils use the sounds they learn to decode and write words accurately. There are still some gaps in some older pupils' reading skills from the delivery of an earlier curriculum. The school successfully addresses these by providing extra support so that these pupils catch up.

The school's recent work to improve behaviour has been successful. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in classrooms is positive. From early years the children consistently follow established routines. While there are known routines for pupils to follow in social times, some staff do not consistently apply the school's expectations for these. As a result, a small number of pupils behave less well at breaktimes than they do in class.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They can talk about their feelings and know how these link to the school's values and fundamental British values. As a result, pupils recognise right and wrong. They learn about equality and diversity and agree everyone is welcome at the school. Pupils enjoy raising money for national charities. As yet they do not do as much charitable work in the local area. Pupils are keen to be more involved in their local community. Some older pupils enjoy positions of responsibility in the school, such as school councillor and digital ambassador. More pupils would like this type of opportunity so they can develop their leadership skills while they are still at school.

Following a previous period of turbulence in the leadership of the school, the current skilled and ambitious leaders have made many positive changes. They are determined to continue to improve the school further with relevant and tightly focused plans. Parents and carers have confidence in the school. They recognise that new leadership has provided stability and can see distinct improvements in their child's learning.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They benefit from highly effective training and support. They are a happy and united team that is expertly equipped to meet pupils' needs. Staff feel that leaders care and are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's high expectations for pupils' behaviour are not consistently met when pupils are not in lessons. This means that a small number of pupils do not behave as well in social times as they do in the classrooms and playtimes are not always as harmonious as they could be. The school should continue its work to support pupils to make the right choices with their behaviour in social times to be in line with their positive behaviour in lessons.
- The school's programme for pupils' personal development is not as broad as it could be. There are not enough opportunities for all pupils to develop leadership skills or to represent the school by making a difference in the local community. The school should extend and strengthen the range of opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence and responsibility so that they are better prepared for their next steps at secondary school.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in May 2018.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	124299
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10322780
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	104
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair of interim executive board	Kate Bullivant
Headteacher	Jane Gaskell
Website	www.st-pauls-stafford.staffs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England voluntary controlled school in the Diocese of Lichfield. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school was carried out in October 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due by 2026.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is currently governed by an interim executive board appointed by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the view of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met with staff and the members of the interim executive board.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Lichfield.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documentation including records of governance, the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the staff survey and pupil survey. An inspector also spoke with parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Corinne Biddell, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Linda Brown

Ofsted Inspector

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